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Computer Gaming World

MARCH 1998
NO. 164

501 CHEATS

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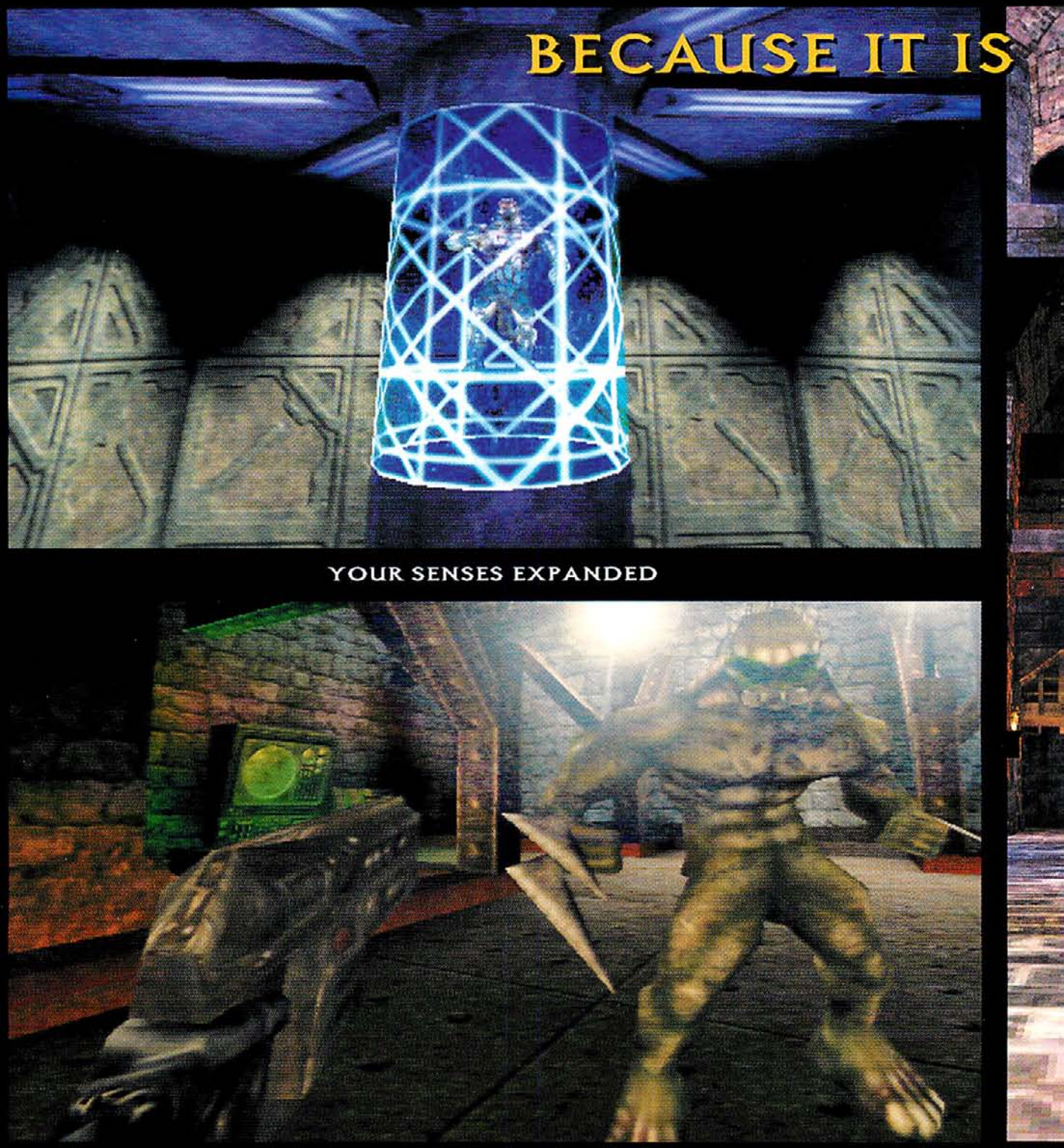
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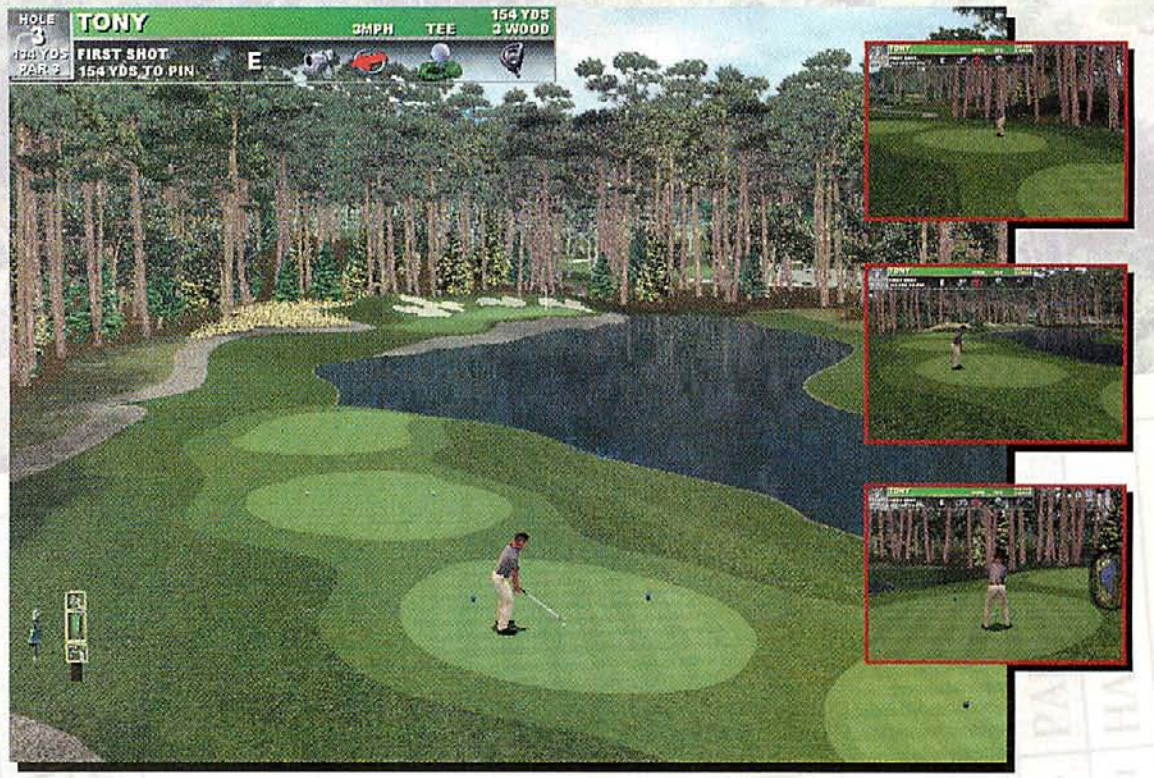
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Actual gameplay screen shots

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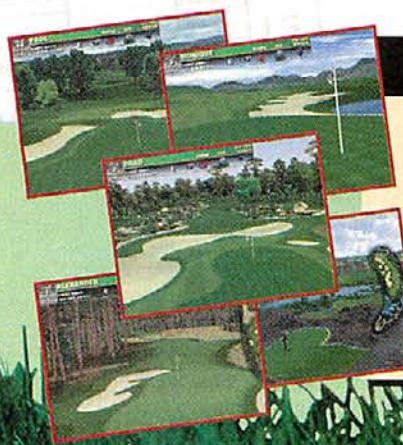
Of course, this is still Jack's game and he's waiting to tee off with you. An all-new AI engine powers challenging computer opponents who will try their best to beat you on the links.

Even better, now you can play uneven and sidehill lies. If you hit a bad shot, you decide whether to declare your ball unplayable and where to take the drop.

Jack may be the greatest golfer of all time, but this is still the game that humbles all players.



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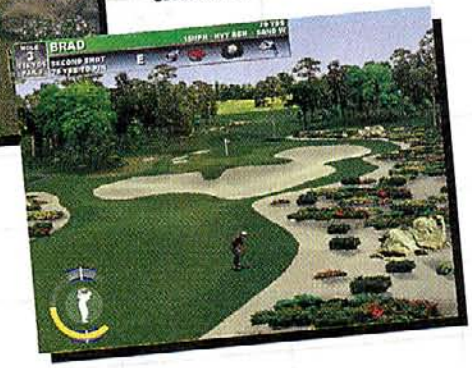
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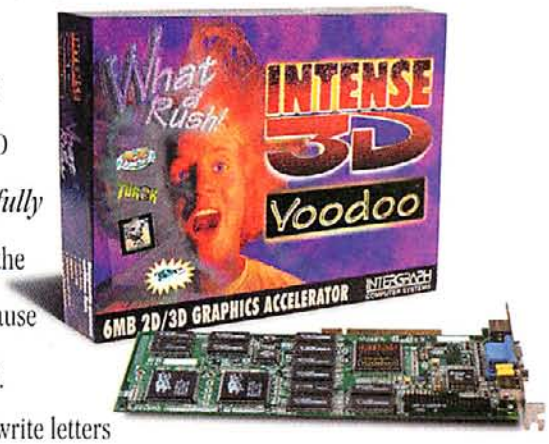


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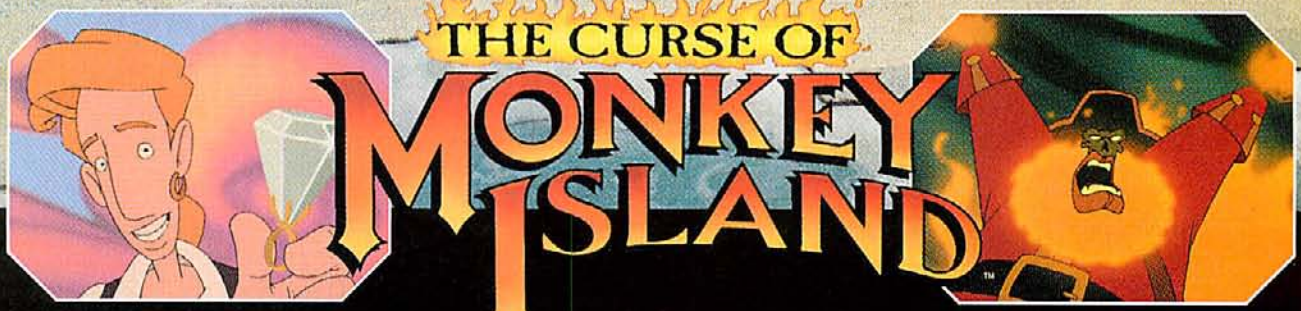
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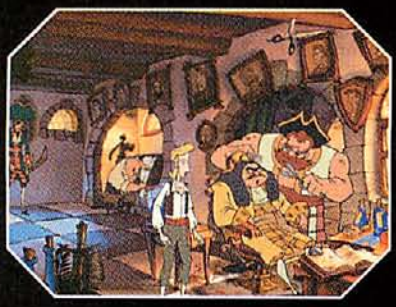
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50

FEATURE

Game of the Year Awards

1997 was a great year for computer gamers. We enjoyed a higher percentage of better games than ever, many of which benefited from robust 3D support. In a year marked by rampant sequelitis, developers still succeeded in creating richer game universes. Of course, 1997 also brought with it some real turkeys, so for the first time, we'll offer our picks for the Best *and* Worst of the year.

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HARDWARE

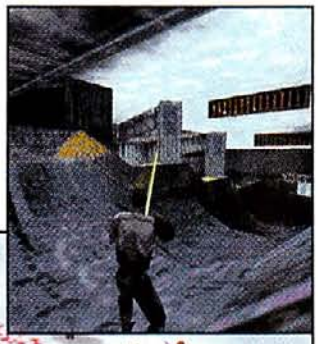
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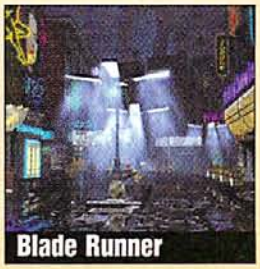
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Blade Runner

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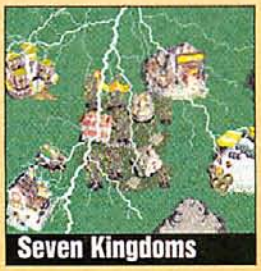
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Seven Kingdoms

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You Don't Know Jack 3 & TV







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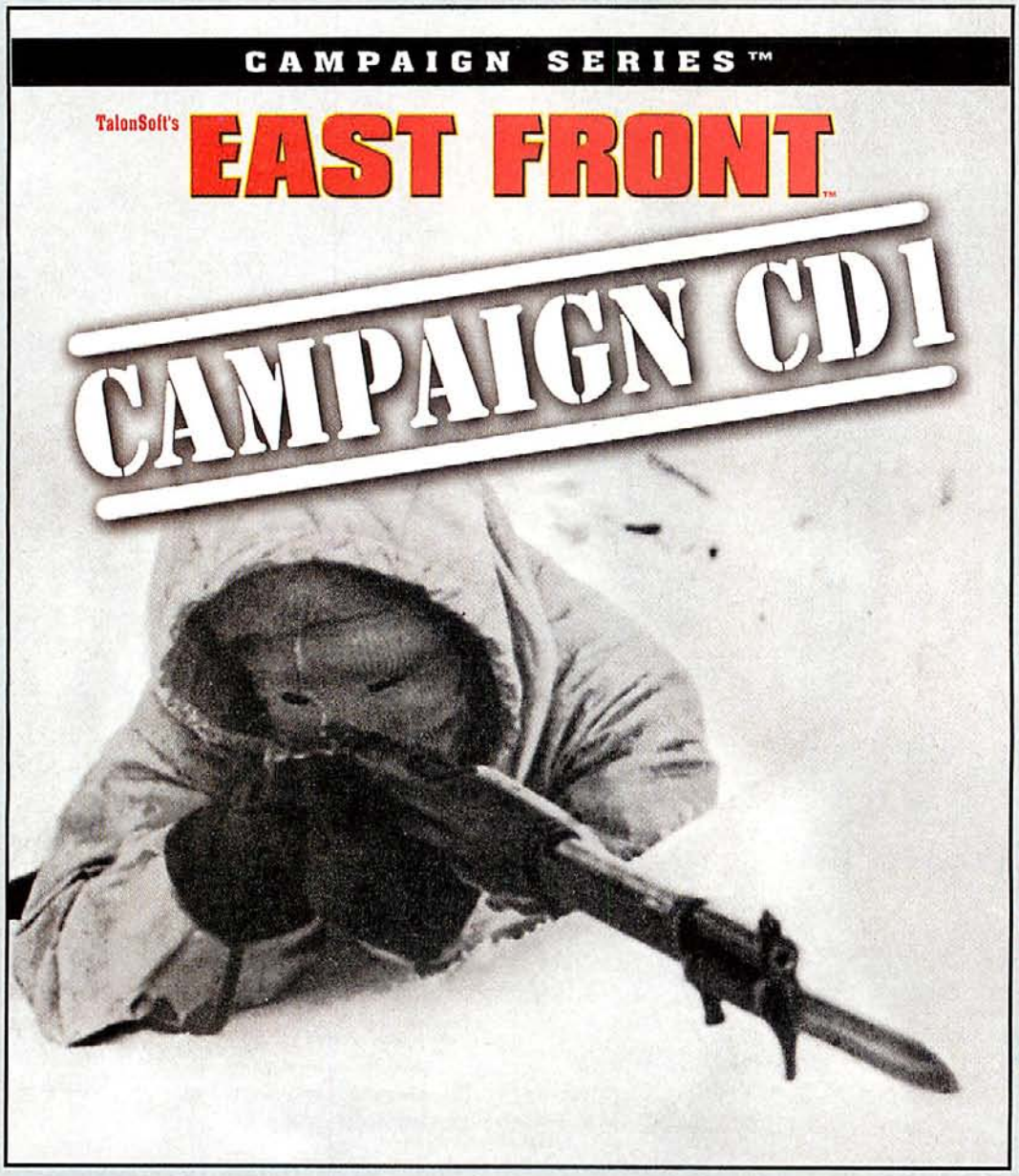


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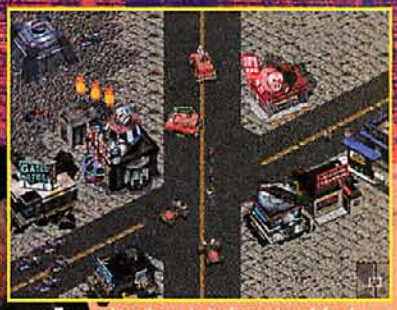
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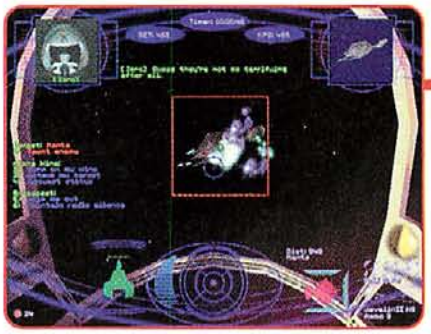
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You've read the previews, now here's your chance to get some hands-on experience with FALCON 4.0 before it hits store shelves. We also have a demo of F/A-18 KOREA to accompany the review in this issue. Look out, too, for our WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY demo and experience *CGW*'s Space Sim of the Year for yourself.

And there's also plenty of action for those who prefer to keep their feet firmly on the ground. Platform-gamers will fall in love with ABE'S ODDYSEE, while the strategists among you can revel in DEADLOCK II and STAR COMMAND DELUXE. In ASC's SANITARIUM, adventurers will find themselves stuck in a world gone mad, battling amnesia to discover their true selves. And finally, action gamers can test their tank-combat skills in Sony's TANARUS.



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CS Commader Longbow II SE	6	95 only	CSCOMM	setup.exe
Deadlock II	30	95 only	DEADII	dl2_cgw.exe
EarthLink	42	Win 3.1/95	EARTHLI	setup.exe/setup.exe
F/A 18: Korea	10	95 only	KORDEMO	kordemo.exe
F-22 Raptor	12	95 only	RAPTOR	setup.exe
Falcon 4.0	73	95 only	FALCON40	setup.exe
NBA Live 98	12	95 only	NBA98	setup.exe
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee	31	95 only	ABEODD	abeodd.exe
PGL	12	95 only	TEN	setup.exe
Sanitarium	74	95 only	SANITARI	sanitari.exe
Semper Fi	15	95 only	SEMPERFI	sfdemo.exe
Star Command Deluxe	36	95 only	STARCOMM	setup.exe
Tanarus	8	95 only	TANARUS	tan93.exe
Wing Commander: Prophecy	62	95 only	WCPDEMO	setup.exe/wcpdemo.exe
Wireplay	23	95 only	WIREPLAY	setup.exe
X-Men:TRA	24	Win 3.1/95	XMEN	setup.exe

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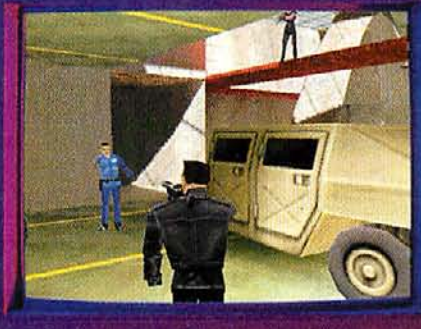
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CGW's Home on the Web

Turn to **GameSpot** *for the Fastest News and Reviews in Gaming*

If you're looking for the best online news and reviews in gaming, turn to the experts at *GameSpot*. Here's a brief overview of what you can expect on *GameSpot* over the next few weeks. To see these articles and others, point your browser to the ultimate gaming page at **www.gamespot.com/march98**.

Strategy Guides

GameSpot strategy guides are unofficial game handbooks, stocked with secrets and step-by-step instructions on how to defeat each level of your favorite games. Our strategy guides unlock those untapped hours of gameplay to help you get more fun for your buck.

Quake II The eagerly awaited sequel is here, and *GameSpot* has everything you'll need to battle your way through all of the single-player levels, discover all the secret areas, and conquer other players with our unbeatable DeathMatch tips.

Age of Empires Let *GameSpot* guide you through the ages. Our definitive AGE OF EMPIRES guide offers expert advice on all units and buildings, and includes walkthroughs of all the missions.

Tomb Raider II While some of you may be quite content simply to watch Lara jumping and shooting her way across your screen, others may be inclined to finish the game. *GameSpot*'s guide to TOMB RAIDER II provides all the tips you'll need to make it through the treacherous levels successfully.

Designer Diaries

Ever wonder what's going on behind the scenes while those much-anticipated games are in development? *GameSpot*'s Designer Diaries follow the progress of game designers Jane Jensen, embarking on her third GABRIEL KNIGHT game for Sierra On-Line, and Tim Schafer, currently working on GRIM FANDANGO for LucasArts. Ion Storm's Tom Hall also provides regular updates on his new game, ANACHRONOX.



CGW Online

Turn to *CGW* Online for news, reviews, strategy articles, and behind-the-scenes features on hundreds of top computer games. Because of our joint venture with *GameSpot*, you'll also see some articles posted online before they're in print!

In addition, be sure to watch out for a major new hardware section by Loyd Case: The Ultimate Game Machine. It's a joint venture from *CGW* and *GameSpot*. If you haven't done so already, be sure to add **www.computergaming.com** to your bookmark collection.

Special Features

GameSpot's Best & Worst Awards for 1997!

It's that time of year again—the time when we editors look back and evaluate what the best and worst products of 1997 were. When you've had a chance to check out the *CGW* Premier Award–winners in this issue, head over to *GameSpot* and see what the folks over there think. There may be some consensus, but we're sure there will also be a few surprises!

Demos

GameSpot has the most thorough and regularly updated game demo libraries on the Web. You'll find demos of many of the games we've reviewed recently, including TOTAL ANNIHILATION, AGE OF EMPIRES, HEXEN II, 7TH LEGION, FALLOUT, iF-16, SHADOW WARRIOR, SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE, and more!

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Blue Byte

License to Kill

When Do Licenses Help Computer Games—and When Do They Hurt?



Charles Ardai once slammed a new offering from a now-defunct publisher by stating that it had more licenses to kill than James Bond. The comment was appropriate. At that time, the prevailing wisdom in the industry was that anyone could sell anything if it had the right license. Many times, those licenses were totally wasted, as the familiar characters from popular books, comics, movies, or television were pasted atop unimaginative games as though they were paper dolls.

Remember Capstone's HOME ALONE and HOMEY D. CLOWN? What about Acclaim's JUDGE DREDD? It was even worse than the movie. And who could forget the inimitable incompetence of Paragon's CAPTAIN AMERICA AND SPIDERMAN VERSUS DOCTOR DOOM? Fortunately, most of those publishers have learned their lessons.

Another popular publisher ploy is to license a popular boardgame or role-playing game and convert it to the computer. Unfortunately, such projects often involve producers who care nothing about the existing property and are determined to put their "vision" on the computer game, even if it guts the spirit of the original product. Certainly, such was the case in Paragon's MEGATRAVELLER I, Mindscape's first *Warhammer 40K* offering (a game so terrible it was never released in this country—though it was "reviewed" by our competition), and the disappointing handling of the MAGIC: THE GATHERING license by MicroProse. Indeed, there isn't anywhere near enough room on this page to list the travesties engendered by *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* products (once SSI quit publishing the successful "gold box" series).

Yet, licenses can be invaluable. When LucasArts quit licensing its hit film properties to third parties and starting producing games based on its own *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* movies, the company became an industry leader almost overnight. Activision cruised from bankruptcy to success with the MECHWARRIOR 2 series as its flagship. When FASA decided to take its property back, Activision wisely found a similar license in Dream Pod 9's HEAVY GEAR. The new series hasn't started out on quite as high a note as the MECHWARRIOR 2 franchise, but it has a rich game universe and tons of potential.

> **"Licensing isn't a magic bullet to fix mediocre properties."**

Westwood Studios took a terrific risk when it licensed the title from a science-fiction film that came out almost 15 years ago. Yet, BLADE RUNNER is, at press time, proving to be one of the best sellers of the year. EA Sports proved that celebrity licenses didn't have to be just a gimmick when it gained access to John Madden's old Oakland Raiders playbook for the original JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL. The company also received plenty of consultation with Earl Weaver for the original EARL WEAVER BASEBALL.

If you want counterexamples, compare the limited success of Sierra's EARTHSIEGE series with the MECHWARRIOR 2 franchise, and don't forget the graveyard of unlicensed sports games that tried to take on EA Sports.

What then, makes licenses work? Brian Fargo, CEO of Interplay Productions, once lined out what I believe is the essential success formula. "For me to license a property," stated the exec, "it has to offer a rich enough universe that I would enjoy adventuring in it myself." Unfortunately for Fargo and Interplay, that statement was made to illustrate why Fargo had just signed a licensing agreement to produce a game based on Kevin Costner's expensive flop, *Waterworld*. It is also unfortunate that Interplay opted to merely jump on the realtime bandwagon and take the rich universe behind *Waterworld*'s background story just to use it in a "Me, too!" product. If the producer of the game had held to Fargo's vision and enabled gamers to really experience the unique world behind the movie, it might have succeeded—in spite of the brand liability in the film's title.

Why do we, as gamers, want to experience games based on other properties? It is simply because we want to experience more of the universe and characters that we enjoyed in the original property. If the producers and designers of the games negate the atmosphere of the original products or put characters in situations that seem preposterous to us, they've done significant damage to our potential enjoyment of the game. However, if they stay consistent with the universe and give us an experience true to the feel of the original property, we will reward them with the praise that counts—continued purchasing over a full product line.

Licensing is not a magic bullet to fix mediocre (or worse) properties, but it is an important tool in shaping the kinds of interactive worlds in which gamers will want to play. Licenses can be the difference between soulless products and soulful products, but they have to be respected.

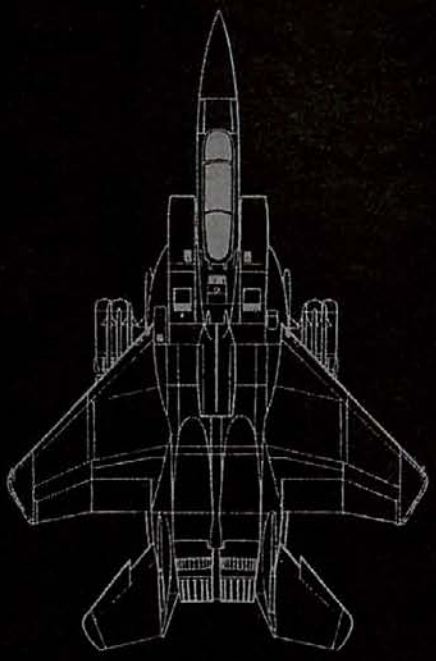


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LETTER OF THE MONTH



WING COMMANDER: CROTCHETY

Did anyone else notice that the mothership in the WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY ad on the back cover of the December issue looks like a large pair of gray pants over a pair of purple shoes? And just what is that control tower supposed to be? Looks more like a fathership to me.

Matt Slattery
via the Internet

Thanks for helping us see this ship in a whole new light. Evidently, Origin desperately wants the game to have legs.

FORTUNE SMELLING

As a longtime *CGW* subscriber, I felt the need to write when I read Martin Cirulis' column about "Fortune Telling" (*CGW* #162, p. 372). In the article, Mr. Cirulis points to the "sneak preview" aspect of this and other game mags and ties this in with reviews. Essentially what he is saying is that we, as gamers, have made it nearly impossible to give a blockbuster game like STARCRAFT a fair review since we are so hungry for information and it has been "previewed" so many times already. What I think he is ignoring is something he has long railed about: reviewer integrity.

He states, "The pressure on any critic is simply to rubber stamp all that has been said." Huh?! Forgive my ignorance here but why are favorable previews (of a product not completed) such a pressure to bias a review? No matter how many good previews a product has gotten, if the final working game stinks, shouldn't a reviewer say so? If STARCRAFT (for example) is a turkey, is Mr. Cirulis going to give it four or five stars just because the "previews" have? That's how the article reads to me, as if he were trying to explain "Sorry guys, I was a fair and honest reviewer until large sums of money became involved." Is he not, by saying and implying such things, proving the accusation that many gamers have held for a long time, that reviewers rate games based on the amount of money (in advertisements mainly) the magazine makes? It reads that way to me.

I completely agree with him that we, the gaming public, are far too hot for previews and, generally, for any news of a highly anticipated title and I *do* think your magazine (and the others) are giving us *exactly* what we want. However, when he puts the fault for the trend toward prereviews on us, I take great offense. We are not in any way forcing the magazines to say anything about an upcoming title other than to simply show us a few screenshots and give us some basic data on what features the game will have. It is the publication and all those who comment on "neat" or "cool" soon-to-be-released titles that drive this trend toward prereviews. I, for one, don't want or need someone to tell me how great a game is before it's in my hands. I read your previews with interest but I would never base my buying decision on an incomplete product. I think most gamers feel the same. The bottom line is that we simply don't *trust* the previews when it comes to buying decisions precisely *because* of the trend he talks about wherein previewers essentially "review" the game before it's done. Anyone remember OUTPOST? *CGW* and most of the other magazines gave this game top marks in their previews and yet the finished product was a dog (to say the least). What it sounds like to me is that Mr. Cirulis is trying to shift blame from *his* (and his profession's) mistakes to the readers, which is reprehensible.

My advice to both Mr. Cirulis and to the gaming publications in general is this: Clean up your previews! Stop telling us how great a game is when

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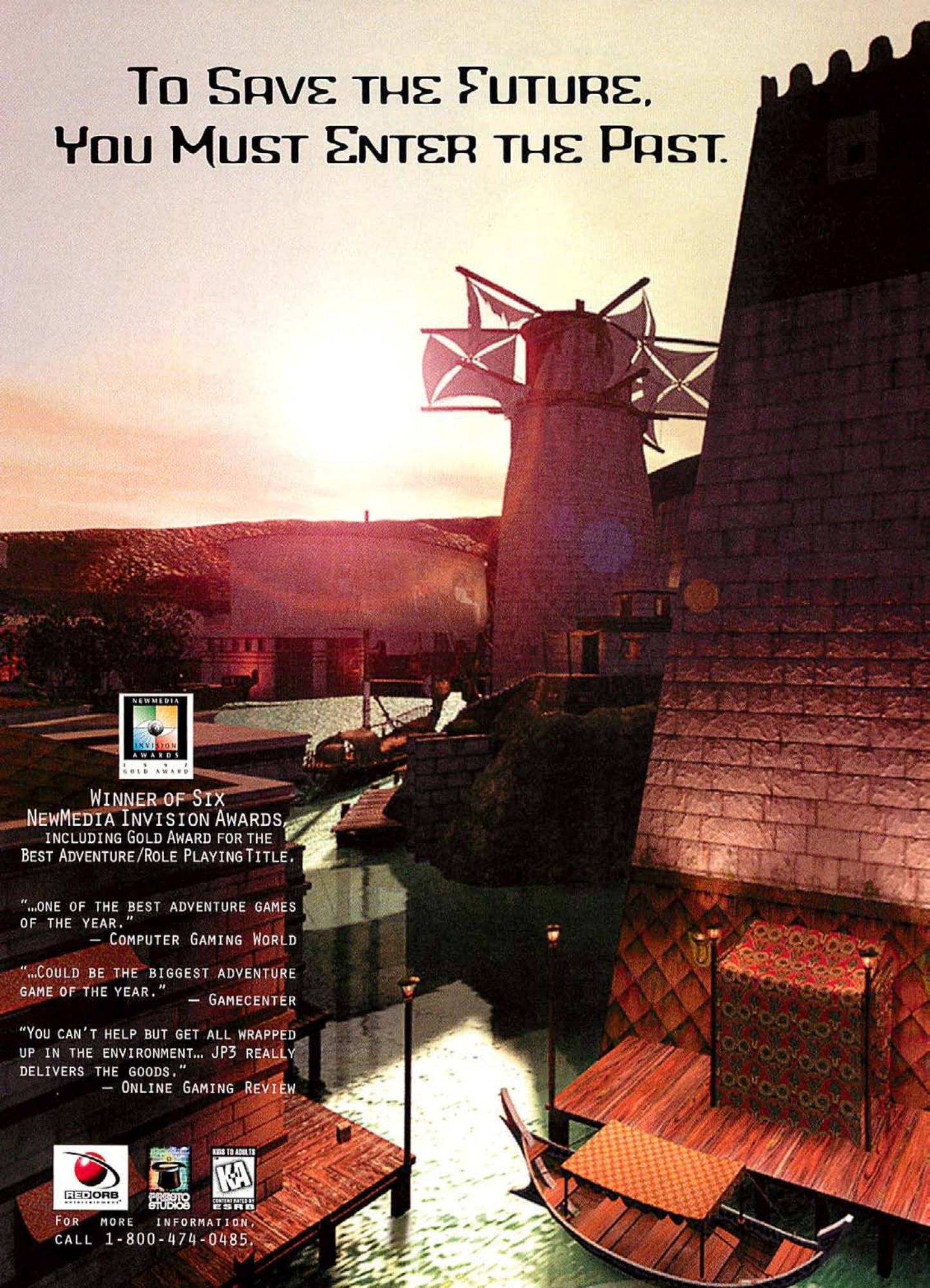
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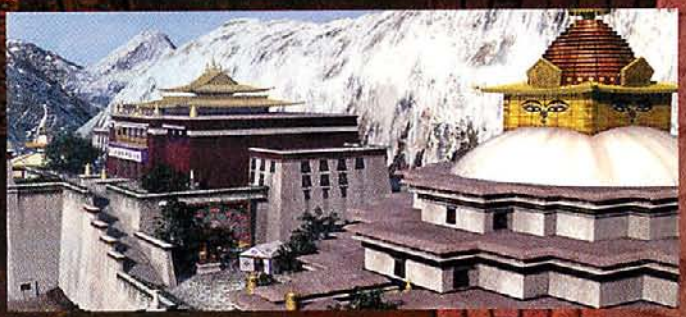

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even *you* don't know for sure! Stop jumping on the hype wagon (upon which the publishers are giving you such a comfortable seat) and simply report the *facts*! Save the opinion and commentary for the finished product!

It's good business to give your customers what they want, and I don't fault you for that. What I *do* fault you for is pointing the finger at us when you begin to show bias, when you should be looking in the mirror and pointing there.

As for telling us what to buy, as long as you do it based on actual *reviews* of *finished* product, then fine. Please do *not* insult my intelligence and that of my fellow gamers by saying that we're forcing you to tell us what to buy before we even can buy it. That's ridiculous.

Steve Fox
via the Internet

Our Editor-in-Chief responds: Like any good columnist, Martin Cirulis draws the issue with bold lines and arouses strong opinions. This column even hit a nerve with me when I edited it. How could the man who skewered CGW cover cutie BATTLECRUISER 3000 and excoriated the much-anticipated OUTPOST in his reviews of those games ever believe that we would allow sneak preview coverage to taint review coverage? Didn't he notice our complete turnaround on PRIVATEER 2 or LEGENDS '98 FOOTBALL? Our editorial policy, as Martin knows, requires that reviewers play the same final code consumers have, and that they finish the game. How could he believe that this policy allows writers to shape their reviews in the image of previews?

Martin is correct in saying that the pressure to, as many readers have put it, "pre-review" games is very real. In blind studies and online feedback, many readers have complained that our reviews are often too late to be helpful. You want earlier recommendations and often look to those of our competitors (who are not bound by the same restraints of reviewing finished products and playing the game all the way through) for early guidance.

I certainly agree with you, though, that market pressure for early information should not be an excuse to rubber-stamp preview coverage. Many readers wrote similar letters to yours asking how any writer or publication with integrity could do so. The short answer is, they can't. Which is why we reviewed HEAVY GEAR and ULTIMA ONLINE the way we did—and rated them at 2.5 and 1.5, respectively.

Here's hoping letters like yours help all of us in the business of covering games focus on careful, sane coverage based on playing working code. I would welcome such a counterrevolution.

Oops, We Goofed!

DIABLO IS IN THE DETAILS

In our February cover story on DIABLO II, we inadvertently placed the target release date during the winter of 1997–98. Actually, the game is scheduled to ship in late 1998. We apologize for the hellish mistake.



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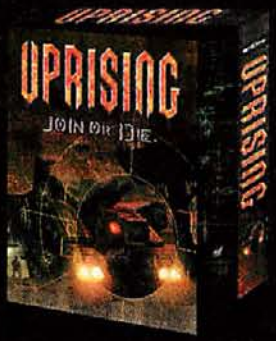
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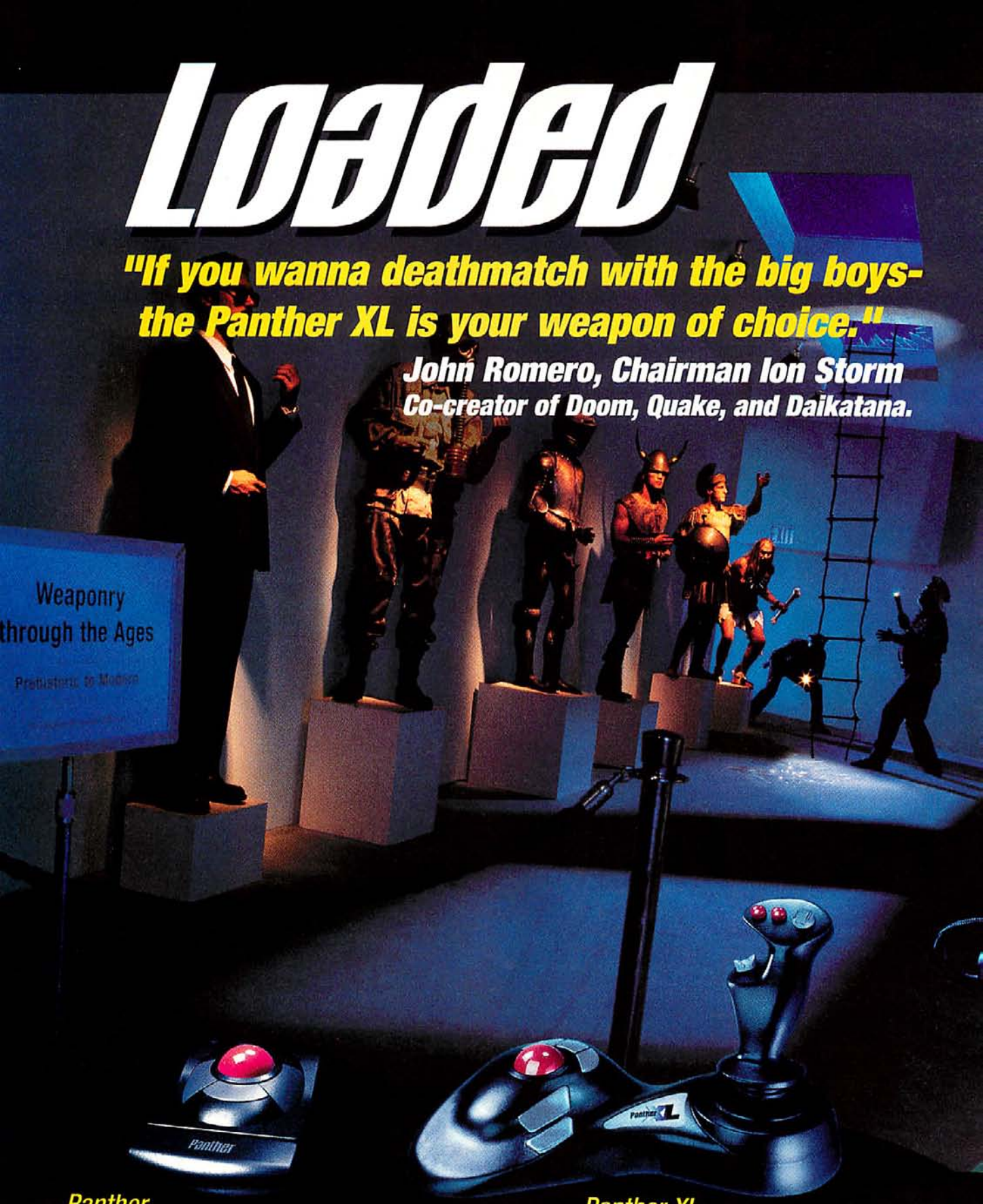
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"If you wanna deathmatch with the big boys- the Panther XL is your weapon of choice."

John Romero, Chairman Ion Storm
Co-creator of Doom, Quake, and Daikatana.



Panther

Upgrade your joystick to 360° of two-fisted independent move-and-aim control. Digital precision. Advanced deathmatch domination.

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The first complete 3D combat controller!

Everything the Panther offers... plus a premium flight stick, built-in throttle and 17 programmable buttons.

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Team Madcatz presents the Panther and Panther XL. Made from the finest ingredients the science of War has to offer. Don't ask how we did it... ask what it can do for you. Because in 3D combat, as in controller design, there's only one philosophy: By any means necessary.

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Edited by Charlotte Panther (CPanther@zd.com)

Microsoft Plays to Win

With Several New Titles In the Works, Microsoft Looks Serious About Games

After the success of AGE OF EMPIRES and CART PRECISION RACING, Microsoft is determined to show gamers that its winning titles aren't just flukes. I took a trip to see the folks at Microsoft recently and found the company's games division hard at work on several titles that are scheduled to ship in the coming months.

Microsoft may be placing its heaviest bets on URBAN ASSAULT and OUTWARS. Both stir the action shooter pot with elements from other genres. URBAN ASSAULT (previously code-named Anarchy) is similar to 3DO's UPRISING: It's an action game set in a war-torn future with intense combat and some strategy elements thrown in for variety. While the interface is currently being overhauled, the gameplay is sound, with plenty of pulse-pounding, force-feedback action for the shooting junkie. The strategy (resource management and unit commands) adds an extra dimension to gameplay, but Microsoft promises that the game will be full of pyrotechnics and swarming enemies.

The second title, OUTWARS, begs comparison to TOMB RAIDER and MDK. It will try to distinguish itself with squad-level gameplay, wherein you traverse alien-infested warzones and bases with AI-controlled squadmates by your side. Puzzle elements will ensure that your brain doesn't atrophy while playing, but for the most part, this game will try to throw lots of action at you. The squadmates element seems to be this game's best shot at snagging an audience; each squadmate will have its own AI, and will behave realistically (shoot them in the back too many times and they'll go after you).



BUG HUNT OUTWARS is a squad-level exterminator game that's equal parts TOMB RAIDER, MDK, and *Starship Troopers*.



PRETTY VIOLENT Expect heavy doses of rapid-fire combat mixed with a little strategy in URBAN ASSAULT (center and bottom).

Both of these action titles will have full support for force-feedback joysticks and 3D acceleration. URBAN ASSAULT is slated for an early summer release, while OUTWARS should be available this spring.

Microsoft also has two new strategy titles in the works. The company is working with AGE OF EMPIRES developer Ensemble Studios, and although the company refused to offer details, we have a feeling that our empires will see a few more ages. On a more immediate front, Ensemble has completed a patch for AGE OF EMPIRES that greatly enhances AI and unit pathfinding, and also blows away the unit limit.

Racing fans won't be left out either—Microsoft assures us that another racing title is in the works, but no one at the company would reveal any further information at press time.

In my visit with Microsoft, I saw plenty of solid titles (and I sneaked peeks at several even cooler games in progress). This leads me to believe that Microsoft has finally gotten its gaming act together.—*Elliott Chin*

StarCraft Update

It's Been Delayed, But StarCraft Looks Worth the Wait

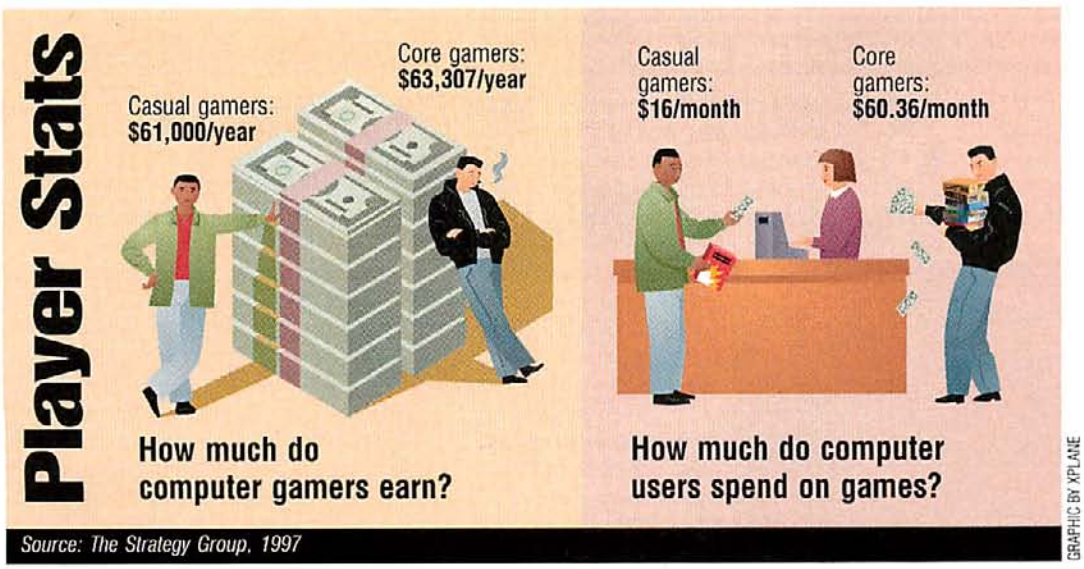






The launch party for 1997's most anticipated real-time strategy game turned into a consolation prize for the press and members of the public who were lucky enough to be invited. StarCraft wasn't ready to ship for the party, but that didn't stop Blizzard from showing its real-time game at the Wizards of the Coast entertainment center in Seattle.

Although the single-player component wasn't on display, Blizzard did demonstrate StarCraft's multiplayer combat on battle.net, with great results. Each alien race proved itself to be unique and full of surprises. While Blizzard had seemed optimistic about meeting its intended end-of-year 1997 release date, some minor tweaks in unit path-finding and AI were apparently needed. Blizzard admitted as much when, shortly after the party, it announced that the release date had been pushed to the end of January 1998. Still, the game looks good, and we had to be pried away from our computers at the end of the night. Although StarCraft still needs a little polishing, Blizzard says it is taking the extra time to ensure that the game lives up to expectations. I wish more game companies would do the same.—*Elliott Chin*



News Flash

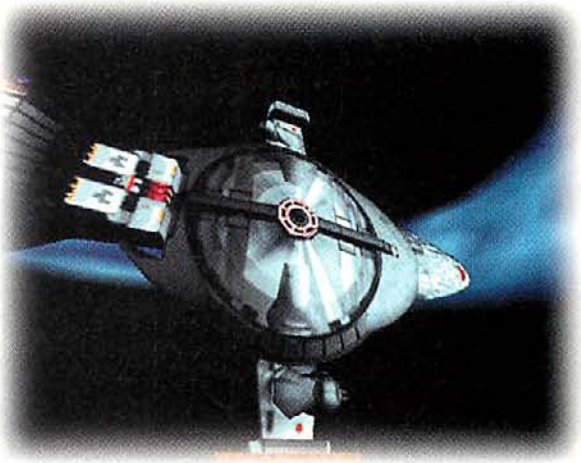
Eidos Interactive announced a deal with game developer and publisher, **Square Co. Ltd.**, to acquire the exclusive North American and European rights to publish Final Fantasy VII—the latest installment of the best-selling role-playing game franchise—for the PC. Released for the PlayStation last year, FFVII sold over 3.2 million units in Japan, making it the best-selling game on that platform. The PC version is scheduled for release this summer.



Ion Storm recently announced that CEO Mike Wilson would be leaving the company to pursue a new interactive game publishing venture. Wilson will join several top-level developers to form a new profit-sharing game company. The new company will be known as **g.o.d (Gathering of Developers)**. John Romero will assume the title of CEO of Ion Storm.

Fox Interactive has teamed up with **Fox Sports** to launch a new line of sports products, including Fox Sports Hockey, Golf, Tennis, and Soccer under the brand name **Fox Sports Interactive**. The games will be supported by a number of major partners and endorsements, including the National Hockey League and the National Hockey Players Association. British game developer **Gremlin** has also signed a long-term agreement to develop products for the new division.

I-War Goes International



While U.S. gamers have slim pickings on space sims that put you in anything bigger than a fighter (only BATTLECRUISER 3000 and STARFLEET ACADEMY come to mind), gamers in Europe have the fortune to be playing I-WAR. This sleeper space sim places you in command of a 150-meter corvette on the side of the Commonwealth, warring against the Independents, a faction of rebels that wants to establish its own government. The sim is being hailed for its extremely realistic flight model, which models mass, inertia, acceleration, and other physics concepts that are often glossed over in space sims.

I-WAR was developed by Particle Systems, and distributed throughout Europe by Infogrames. Although negotiations were still in progress at press time, indications suggest that Activision will pick up the title for the U.S. release. Slated for first quarter '98, the U.S. version will include some extra features, namely multiplayer capability and 3Dfx-acceleration (although the game already looks phenomenal in software). Gamers in Europe are raving about I-WAR's complexity of gameplay, realistic flight model, and awesome graphics—it looks as if WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY may have some competition on its hands.

The game will be released under a different name over here, as "I-WAR" is already trademarked in the U.S. by Atari.—*Thierry Nguyen*

Near-Total Annihilation?

GT Interactive/MicroProse Merger Falls Flat

Everyone on Wall Street seems to have an opinion about the "annulled marriage" of MicroProse and GT Interactive. But when we cut through all the spin doctoring, *CGW* found that the merger broke off due to a fundamental difference: how each company writes off its research and development costs.

MicroProse uses the more typical approach for game publishers. For example, when ULTIMATE CIV II ships this summer, MicroProse will pay the developer, and write off those fees that quarter—taking the revenue "hit" immediately. In a similar situation, GT, on the other hand, will amortize the developer fees over a longer period of time. The GT approach can put a better bottom line on paper in the short run, but if, say, more than a single product's sales are below expectations, the company could feasibly show huge losses down the line. This is not the first time such accounting differences have been divisive among game publishers. *Forbes* magazine once wrote that Sierra was playing "adventure games" with its books for writing off debts using the entertainment industry method that GT uses. Sierra changed its accounting procedure several years ago.

In the end, the two companies could not come to a compromise between the two methods, and a split ensued. In the long term, the non-merger may end up benefiting MicroProse more than GT. We'll know for sure once FALCON 4.0 ships. —*Terry Coleman*

THIS JUST IN

Short takes on games and hardware released just prior to press time.

WARWIND II

With the couple bazillion real-time strategy games that have been released of late, many will be lost in the deluge. Let's hope WARWIND II won't be one of them. While not exactly on the genre's cutting edge, WARWIND II has unique, entertaining gameplay that offers four separate campaigns for over 46 different scenarios. Gamers will have to carefully consider how to use limited troops, since the game doesn't allow you to just churn out units. In addition to the first game's aliens, two human factions have joined the conflict along with new units and indigenous animal life that you can tame to aid your cause.



—*Robert Coffey*

Strategic Simulations, Inc, (408) 737-6800. www.warwind.com PC CD-ROM



CHAOS ISLAND

Something has survived all right: the need for Dreamworks to license anything and everything to do with *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*. CHAOS ISLAND, though, is well worth the purchase for youngsters who need their latest dinosaur fix. The graphics are pretty good (especially the landscapes), but the main selling point

Jane's Combat Gifts

The Origin Skunkworks team has three patches in the works for devoted LONGBOW fans. Owners of 3D cards *not* based on 3Dfx Voodoo chips will be happy to hear that the LONGBOW 2 team has created a Direct3D patch for the simulation. Because so many 3D cards don't support many of the features used by LONGBOW 2, however, the support will only be for certain high-end cards. First to be supported will be the nVidia RIVA 128 chipset.

A 3Dfx patch is also in the works for LONGBOW GOLD for Win 95. Although the graphics won't match the detail of LONGBOW 2, the patch should make for much faster frame rates, as well as improved visual effects from bilinear filtering, better shadows, and an improved sky.

Finally, hard-core LONGBOW 2 fans will want to download the ULTIMATE LONGBOW 2 CAMPAIGN CHALLENGE, a modified version of the Azerbaijan campaign that replaces all the enemy Iranian combat equipment with the latest Russian hardware. Jane's Combat Sims' Andy Hollis promises "if you can make it through this one, you are truly one of the elite."

All of these patches, as well as a new matchmaking service for online LONGBOW 2 play, can be found at **www.janes.ea.com**. *—Denny Atkin*



is the real-time engine coupled with the excitement of hatching Stegosaurus and directing characters from the movie. I have to admit, this game brought back the feeling of wielding my action figures over imaginary landscapes. It's not as sophisticated as some mission-based real-time games, but it's great fun for those who loved the movie. *—Tahsin Shamma*

Dreamworks Interactive, (800) 428-5331
www.dreamworksgames.com
Win 95 CD-ROM

CONSTRUCTOR

CONSTRUCTOR treads on familiar territory, allowing gamers to build and manage a city from the ground up. The game offers an element of humorous complexity, however, by requiring the player to interact with the individuals who inhabit the game world. Players must keep tenants in line by maintaining their houses, dealing with their complaints, and sometimes even intimidating them into submission. Up to four Machiavellians can compete through networked play, to see who can run the best city while ruthlessly sending hippies, gangsters, and psychotics to harass their enemies. Be forewarned that the required reading of the manual may not pay off in the gameplay.

—Matthew Schaefer

Acclaim, (516)759-7800
www.acclaimentertainment.com
PC CD-ROM



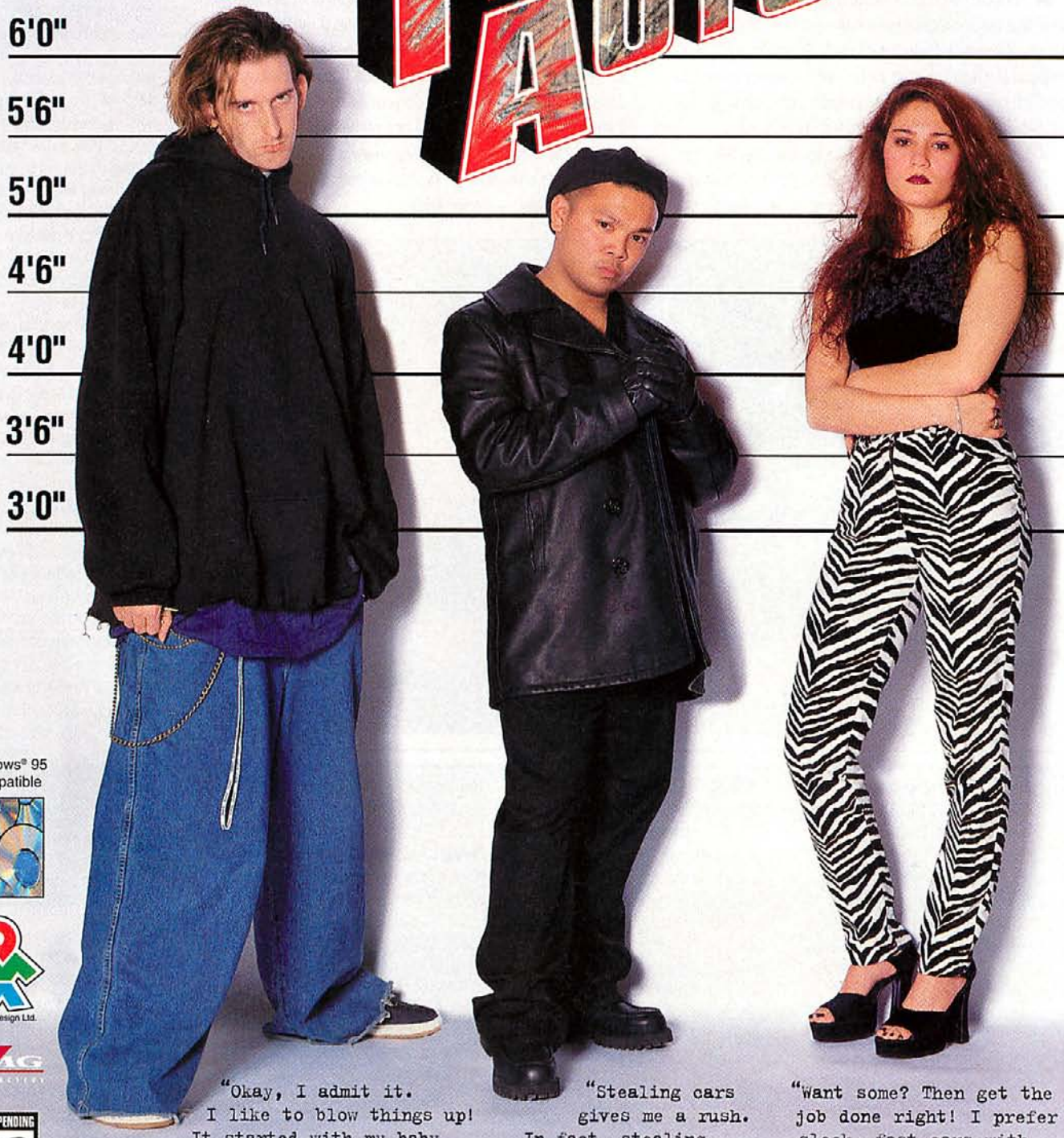
News Flash

Considering the huge following *The X-Files* has established over the last couple of years, you'd expect licensing kings **Fox Interactive** to be publishing *X-Files* products by the dozen. But, as of press time, there wasn't a single *X-Files* CD-ROM on the market. It looks like that will change this summer when Fox releases the *X-Files* adventure game, developed by **Hyberbole Studios** (QUANTUM GATE, VORTEX) in cooperation with Chris Carter. The game's release is scheduled to coincide with the premiere of the *X-Files* movie. In the meantime, though, Fox does have a little teaser for those requiring a Scully and Mulder fix: X-FILES: UNRESTRICTED ACCESS. This multimedia product—basically a database for chronically obsessed *X-Filers*—is stuffed with full-motion video, shots, sound bites and all the information you could ever want to know about the series. Using **Microsoft** Internet Explorer as a browser, it allows you to leaf through over 90 case files and 600 dossiers covering the first four seasons



of the show. And, as season five progresses, fans can connect to a special XFUA Web site to download weekly updates and add to their database. XFUA also includes a Desktop Designer with screensavers, wallpaper, icons, sounds, and *X-Files* trivia factoids. It should be on store shelves by the time you're reading this.

GRAND THEFT AUTO



"Okay, I admit. I like to blow things up! It started with my baby sister's doll house, and well... it just went from there!"

"Stealing cars gives me a rush. In fact, stealing anything gives me a rush."

"Want some? Then get the job done right! I prefer sleek, fast cars with room in the back. Know what I mean!?"

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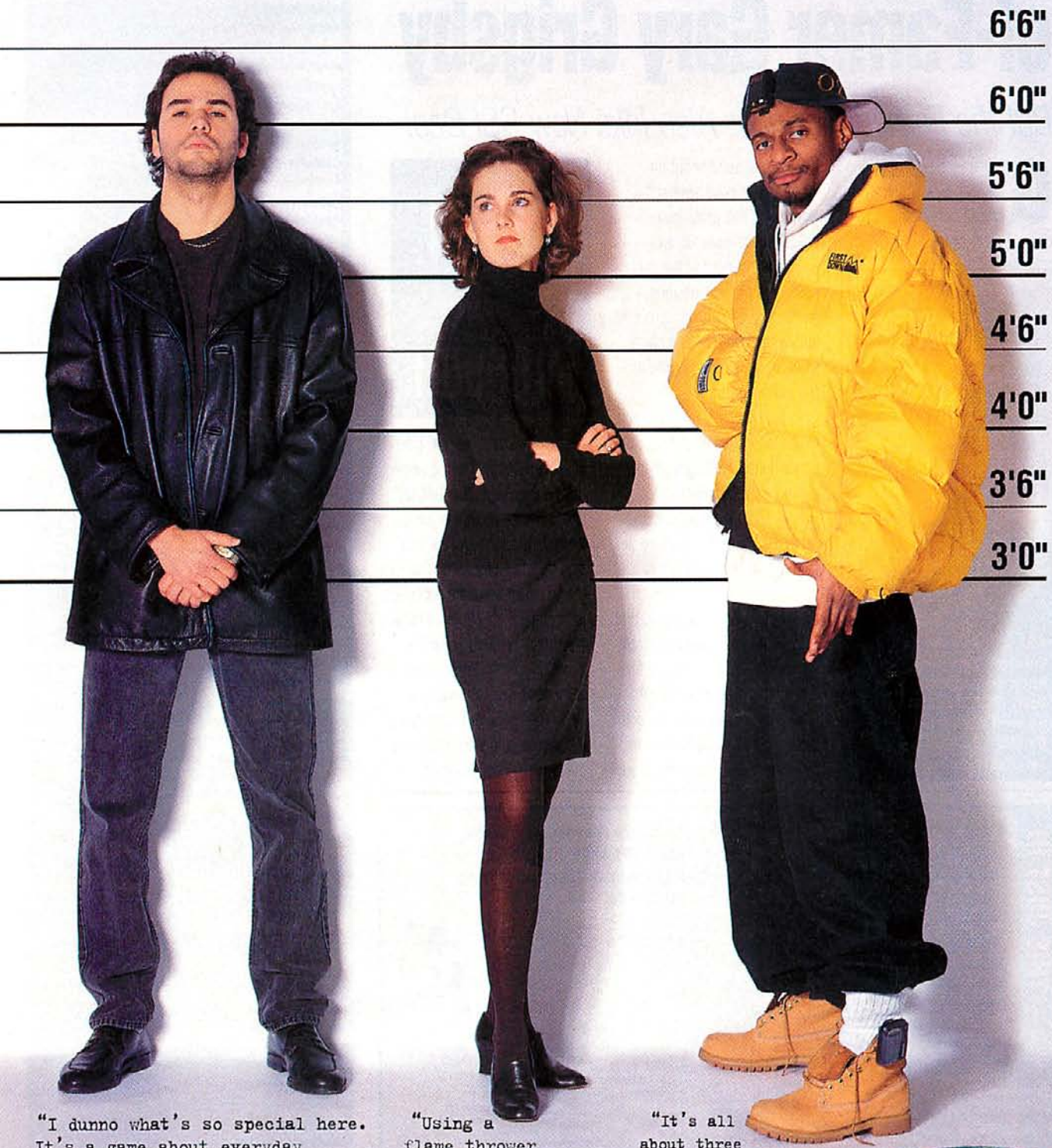
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It's a crime.



"I dunno what's so special here. It's a game about everyday life, ain't it?"

"Using a flame thrower on a rival gang just gives me that warm and fuzzy feeling all over."

"It's all about three things - fast cars, easy money and... fast cars."

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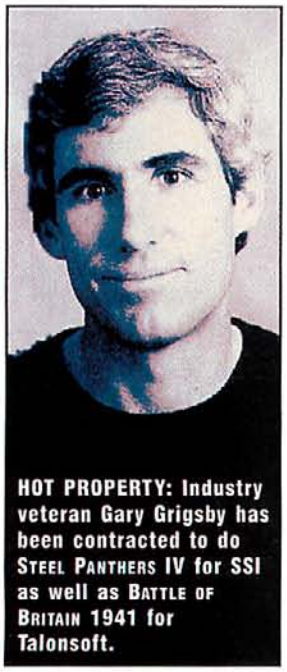
GO TO #248 @ www.computergaming.com/infolink

http://www.ascgames.com

Talonsoft Signs Hall-of-Famer Gary Grigsby

But the Famed Designer Also Inks New SSI Deal

Gary Grigsby is one of the few game designers whose career spans the entire history of the industry. It's been a real adjustment for someone who witnessed the advent of CGA graphics to adjust to Windows 95 and Internet gaming, but the success of his recent designs, such as the STEEL PANTHERS series, shows that Grigsby still has a few surprises hidden away in the old hexgrid.



HOT PROPERTY: Industry veteran Gary Grigsby has been contracted to do STEEL PANTHERS IV for SSI as well as BATTLE OF BRITAIN 1941 for Talonsoft.

In fact, Grigsby is very much in demand. Just after TalonSoft announced that Grigsby had signed a deal for BATTLE OF BRITAIN 1941 (scheduled for an August 1998 release)—a strategic-level air game similar to Grigsby's venerable USAF on the Apple. *CGW* discovered that Grigsby has also been contracted to do STEEL PANTHERS IV for SSI (to be released in 1999).

Grisgby's co-designer for both games will again be Keith Brors, with whom Gary has enjoyed success since STEEL PANTHERS (and who often doesn't get the respect that he deserves). That Grigsby and Brors are designing games for both TalonSoft and SSI is a sign that the competition between the two main wargame publishers is heating up. Of course, if these games are anywhere near the quality of *CGW*'s 1995 Wargame of the Year, STEEL PANTHERS, or *CGW* Hall-of-Famer KAMPFGRUPPE, it's gamers who stand to benefit the most. —*Terry Coleman*

THIS JUST IN

EVOLUTION

When the booklet that comes with a game is both more entertaining and more educational than the product it supports, there's a problem. And the Discovery Channel's new strategy title, EVOLUTION, sure has problems. Players must nudge their species up the evolutionary ladder while contending with rival species and a constantly changing (and frequently hostile) planet. It may *sound* good, but in practice it's a dull exercise in non-control and waiting, dominated by non-events. A thoroughly unfriendly interface does an incredible job of standing directly between the gamer and what little enjoyment there is to be had. EVOLUTION is extinct upon arrival.

—*Robert Coffey*

Discovery Channel Multimedia, (800) 780-6044
http://multimedia.discovery.com
PC CD-ROM

STREETS OF SIM CITY

In this game, you drive around your own SIMCITY 2000 city in missions that require you to either eliminate the opposition or perform other tasks. This style of game has not only been done before (INTERSTATE '76), it's been done better. A few minutes of gameplay and you'll realize that this game is neither as involving nor sophisticated as I-'76.

—*Tahsin Shamma*

Maxis, (800) 336-2947
www.maxis.com
Win 95 CD-ROM

PIPELINE

Aces: X-Fighters Sierra	Fall 98
Air Warrior III Kesmai/I-Magic	3/98
Asheron's Call Turbine/Microsoft	Summer 98
Baldur's Gate Interplay	4/98
Battle of Britain 1941 Talonsoft	8/98
Battlezone Activision	Summer 98
Creatures II Mindscape	11/98
Daikatana Ion Storm/Eidos	3/98
Deep Six Virgin	Spring 98
Descent Freespace Interplay	5/98
Duke Nukem Forever Apogee/3D Realms	6/98
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Earthworm Jim 3 Interplay	6/98
European Air War MicroProse	5/98
Falcon 4.0 MicroProse	3/98
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Final Fantasy VII Squaresoft	4/98
Freedom in the Galaxy Avalon Hill	10/98
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Guardians: Agents of Justice MicroProse	4/98
Half-Life Valve/Sierra	3/98
Hardball 6 Accolade	3/98
IF/A-18 Interactive Magic	4/98
IA-10 Warthog Interactive Magic	Fall 98
Interstate '77 Activision	3/98
iPanzer 44 Interactive Magic	3/98
Jagged Alliance II Sir-Tech	4/98
Jane's F-15 Jane's/ EA	Spring 98
King's Quest: Mask of Eternity Sierra	3/98
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MiG Alley Empire	Summer 98
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Operational Art of War TalonSoft	Spring 1998
Panzer Commander SSI	6/98
Prey Apogee/3D Realms	Winter 98
Quest For Glory V Sierra	Spring 98
Reach for the Stars II Microsoft/ SSG	Summer 98
Redguard Bethesda	Spring 98
Redline Accolade	5/98
Return to Krondor Sierra	Winter 98
Revolution Fenris Wolf/GT Interactive	Winter 98
Secret of Vulcan Fury Interplay	3/98
Skies SegaSoft	Summer 98
Sanitarium ASC Games/DreamForge	4/98
Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Firaxis/EA	Summer 98
SimCity 3000 Maxis	Spring 98
Sin Activision	3/98
Soldiers at War SSI	3/98
Sorry Hasbro	3/98
Squad Leader Big Time/Avalon Hill	Winter 98
Star Trek: First Contact MicroProse	Summer 98
Stratego Hasbro	Fall 98
Su-27 Flanker 2.0 SSI	8/98
Tac Ops '98 Avalon Hill	4/98
Trespasser: Jurassic Park DreamWorks	Spring 98
Ubik Cryo	4/98
Ultima IX Origin/EA	Winter 98
Ultimate Civ II MicroProse	5/98
Uprising Cyclone Studios	Winter 97
VR Baseball '99 Interplay	Spring 98
WarBreeds Red Orb	3/98
WarCraft Adventures Blizzard	4/98
Warhammer 40K: Chaos Gate SSI	6/98
Warhammer: Dark Omen EA	3/98
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X-Files Adventure Game Fox Interactive	Summer 98


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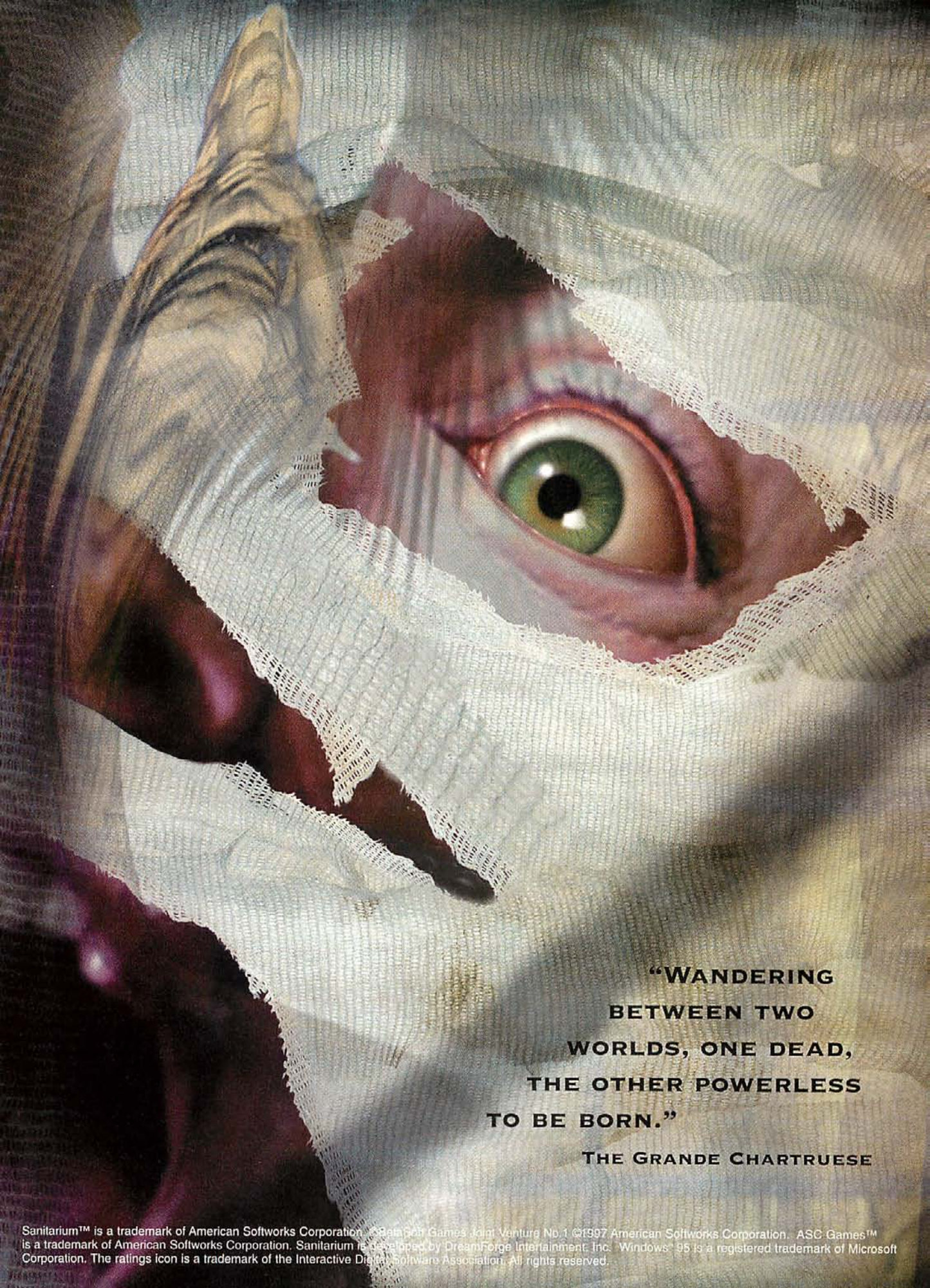
THINK YOU'RE UP TO IT? CAN YOU REPOPULATE YOUR ANNIHILATED RACE, RESEARCH THE TECHNOLOGIES, EXPLORE MULTIPLE UNIVERSES, AND DEFEND YOUR SPACE COLONY FROM MARAUDING ALIEN RACES — ON LAND AND SPACE SIMULTANEOUSLY?

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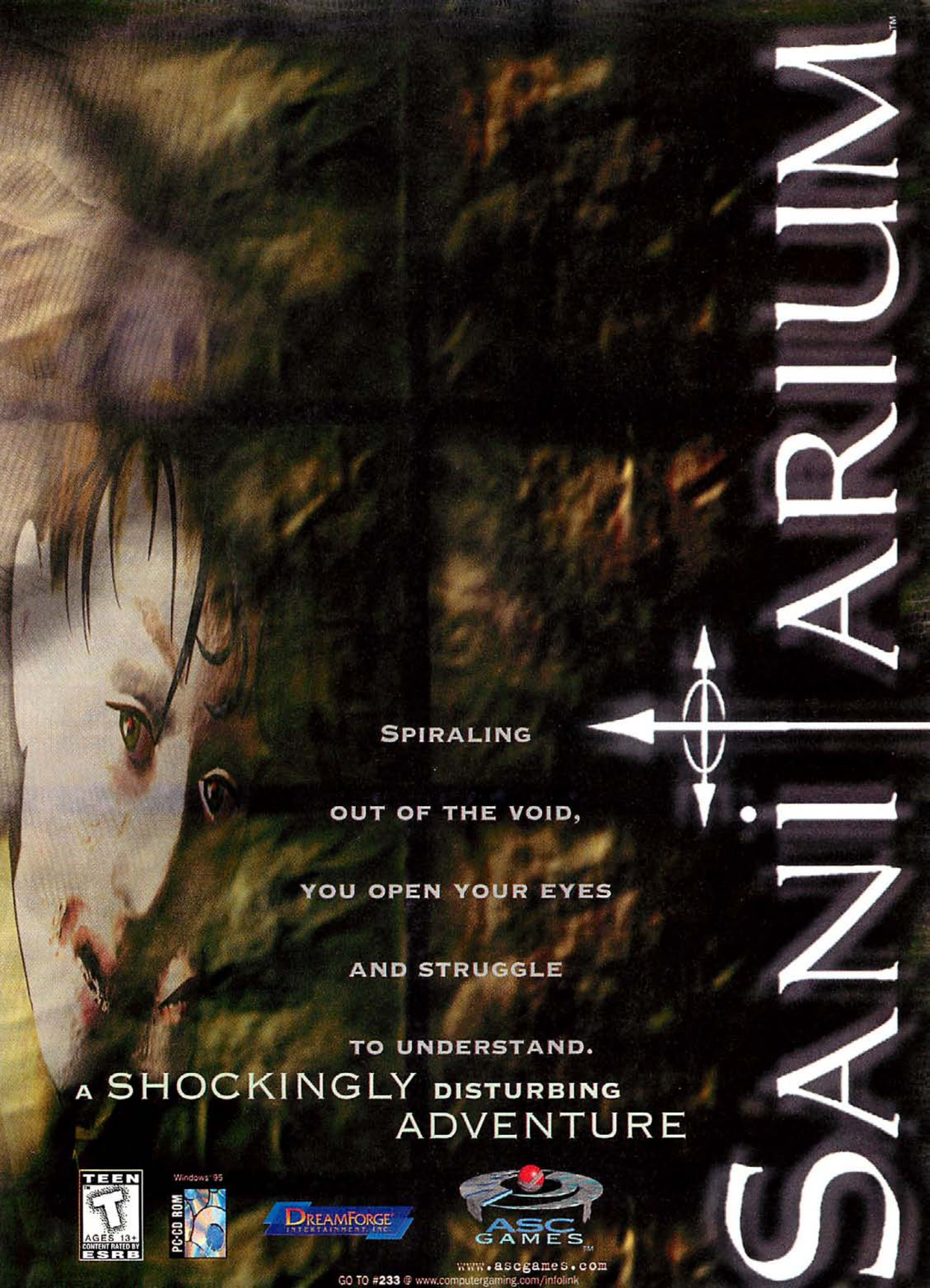
A.I.

ALIEN INTELLIGENCE™

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GO TO #233 @ www.computergaming.com/infolink

Cracking the Codes

501 Underhanded Ways to Cheat Your Way to Victory

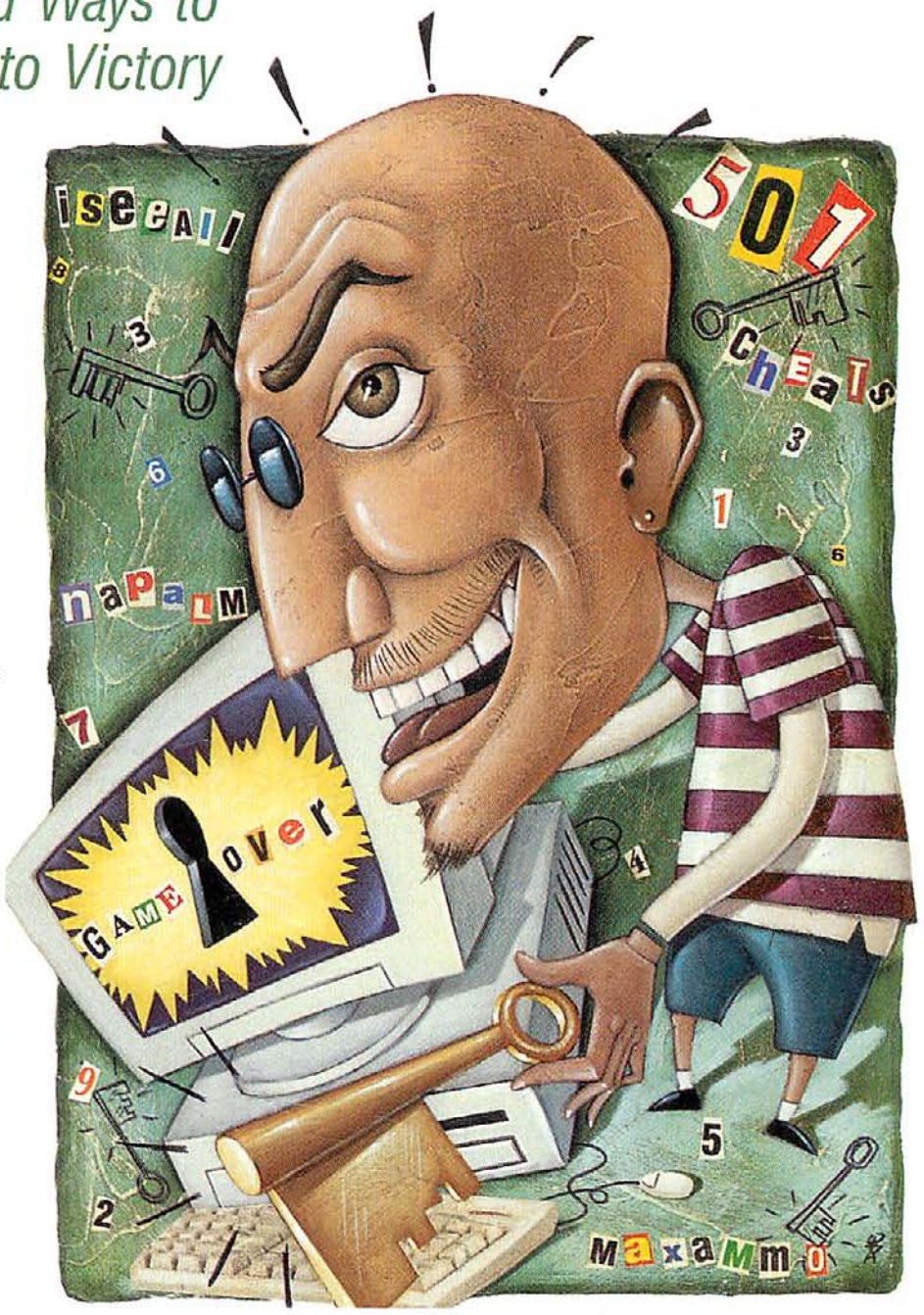


ILLUSTRATION: NATHAN OTA

You're under the gun and things don't look good. Fifty Shang villagers are beating on your poor Choson axemen in AGE OF EMPIRES. Overwhelming odds are making you reconsider your decision to embrace the Light Side of the Force in JEDI KNIGHT. You keep dying in STAR TREK: BORG and you really, really want to move on to a more interesting game. What will you do? What *will* you do?

Compiled by Tahsin Shamma

Cheat, that's what! Luckily for you, game programmers usually slip in a few magical codes that can give you the power to kill all your enemies in a single keypress, open doors, heal wounds, or even turn back time! The biggest problem with these wonderful cheats, however, is finding out what they are. Well, have no fear, we've taken the time to search out every cheat code known to man (or ogre), and they're all listed right here. After all, there's nothing wrong with cheating—just don't get caught...

ADVENTURE/RPG

Betrayal in Antara

Press Ctrl-Shift-Z to bring up a window, then type in these codes:

1. **some call me tim** *Kills all enemies*
2. **supermarket for the rich** *Brings up inventory full of weapons, armor, vials*
3. **why am i so dull** *Maximizes stats*
4. **gotta have magic** *Aren learns all spells*
5. **ask a glass of water** *Teleports party to beginning of chapter*
6. **man does my leg hurt** *Heals party*

Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail

7. Type **uranus** at the options screen just after you start a new game to travel anywhere immediately.
8. Type **lobstergirl** at the screen just after you run away to get the hidden sub-game.
9. Type **allclips** in the Book of the Game to see all the video clips on the Grail Vision page.

Star Trek: BORG

10. Type in **obey** to skip to the next challenge point.
11. Type in **borg** or **hugh** to skip to the parts where you are a Borg.

SPORTS

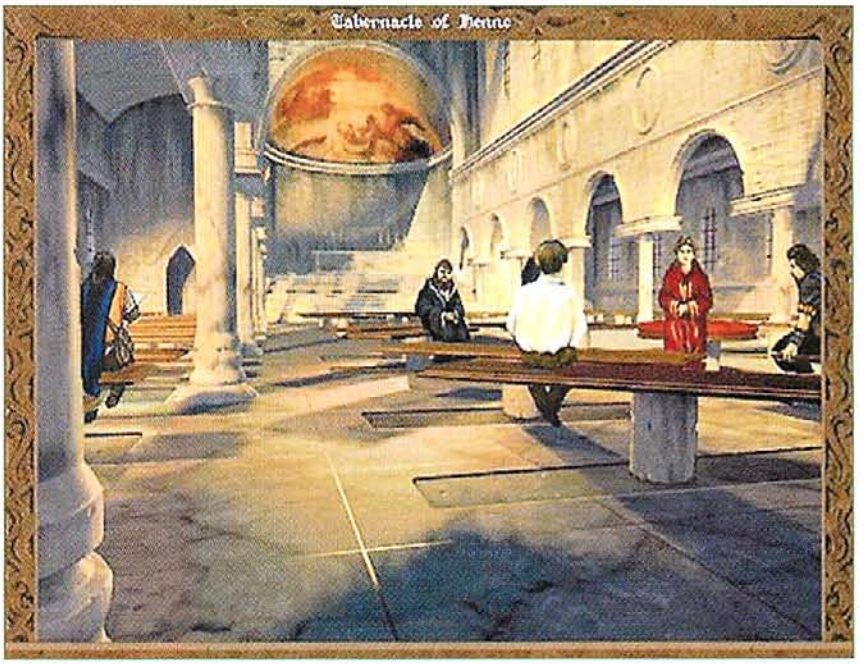
FIFA 97

For these to work, you need to set your system date back to February 29, 1997. Select the Singapore team and type these while playing.

12. **cantona** *Enables player to do a flying kick to a spectator*
13. **kayu** *Referee wears only underwear*
14. **kelong** *Gets players Abbas Saad and Michael Vana*
15. **laochiao** *Gets players Quah Kim Song and Dollah Kassim*
16. **lth** *Opponents forced to own goal*

Formula 1

Save a game using these names, then start a quick race and abandon it. The effect should then work.



BETRAYAL IN ANTARA Instant healing, full stats, or access to al the spells in existence certainly can help speed your way through the game's quests.

17. **speedy** *Enables the bonus track*
18. **muzfrank** *Changes in-game voices*
19. **ashcakes** *Lava mode*

NHL 97

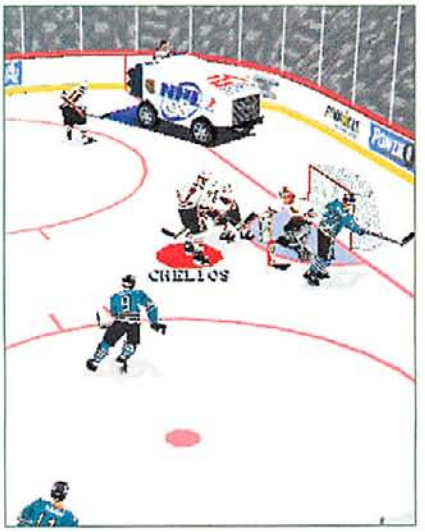
Press Shift and type WAGD to enable cheats

20. **h** *Home team scores a goal*
21. **v** *Visiting teams scores a goal*
22. **p** *Ends period*
23. **g** *Ends game*
24. **o** *Goes into overtime*
25. **i** *Causes an injury*
26. **f** *Causes a fight*
27. **t** *Shrinks players*
28. **Shift-t** *Enlarges shrunken players*
29. **1** *Two-minute penalty is called*
30. **2** *Four-minute penalty is called*
31. **4** *Five-minute penalty is called*
32. **5** *Penalty shot*

NHL 98

Type in these codes while playing.

33. **mantis** *Gives players elongated arms, legs, and necks*
34. **nhlkids** *Makes players kidsize*
35. **homegoal** *Gives home team a goal*
36. **awaygoal** *Gives away team a goal*
37. **penalty** *Causes a penalty*
38. **injury** *Causes an injury*
39. **zambo** *Puts the zamboni on the ice*
40. **victory** *Starts fireworks over the rink*
41. **flash** *Camera flashes from the stands*
42. **spots** *Turns on pregame spotlights*
43. **check** *Every player automatically body-checks an opposing player to the ice upon contact.*
44. **grab** *Similar to CHECK but with a stick hold instead of a check*
45. **eaeao** *Gives you the EA Blades team*



NHL 98 Opposing players cramping your style? Drop a Zamboni in their way.

Play your cards like an XPERT

and you'll win every time.

ATI – it's all in the cards.

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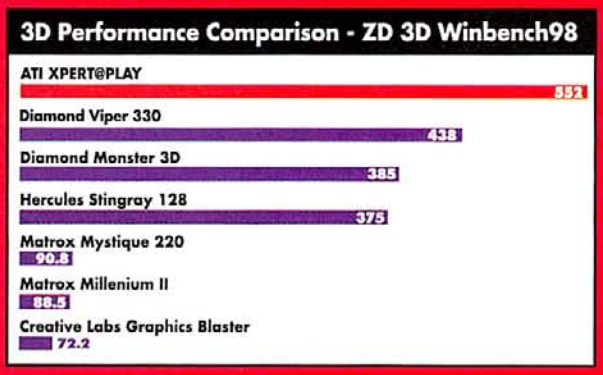
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3D Performance Comparison - ZD 3D Winbench98



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ATI



Triple Play 97

To play in the alternate stadiums, go to the Stadium Select screen and press the arrow keys (r = right, l = left, u = up, d = down) in the following sequences:

46. r, l, u, l, d, r, l *Mystery Stadium*
47. u, d, r, u, d, l, u *Cornfield*
48. To hit a monster home run, hold down the **1, 2, and 7** number keys while swinging.

Triple Play 98

49. 1212-Ctrl *Lets you play as the Electronic Arts Dream Team*
50. 1212-Ctrl 21 *Gives you access to three new stadiums: The Cornfield, Ebbets Field, and the Polo Grounds*
51. 1212-Shift-Ctrl *EA Dream Team plays in their underwear*

SIMULATION/SPACE

Advanced Tactical Fighters

52. At the main screen, press **Alt-Shift-Ctrl** on the right side of the keyboard. This will make every plane available to you.

Comanche 3

During flight press R, then type the following commands and hit Enter:

53. cat9 *Existing damage disappears (only works with nonfatal attacks)*
54. ipig *Weapon loading becomes faster*
55. ratz *Become invisible for 30 seconds*

G-Nome

At the main screen, hit Ctrl-F1. This gives you a box in which to enter cheats.

56. horny elk leer *Maximum range radar*
57. o'sarge *Gives the training mission sergeant an Irish accent*
58. redtop trod *Play any mission*
59. rotted drop *Press Ctrl-f for heavy damage*
60. brass clue *Press Ctrl-z for full ammunition*
61. had a nude on *Press Ctrl-i for invincibility*
62. half libel *Press Ctrl-b to teleport*
63. oh no! less japan *Press Ctrl-x for Ion Strike*

F/A-18 Korea

64. To take the tactical nuclear bombs along on any mission, first set each pylon to read **Empty.** Then click the right of the **Empty** row until a red X appears. Now you'll be able to mount two nukes on your wing pylons.

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

Hold down Ctrl-Alt-Shift while typing these codes:

65. superfunkicalifragisexy *Invulnerability*
66. iseenfireandiseenrain *Toggles unlimited ammo*
67. ooohhhlllaaalllaaa *Toggles heat-tracking*
68. itsdabooomb *Nukes targeted Mech*
69. inmybeautifulballoon *Instantly adds jumpjets to your Mech*
70. redjackandtikrules *Destroys targeted Mech*
71. likethecomstarbaby *Successfully completes mission*
72. ontimeeverytime *Toggles time compression*
73. crazysexycool *Toggles infinite jumpjets*
74. beholdmyglory *Free-eye mode*
75. antijolt *Toggles time expansion*
76. flashyflashy *Toggles autogrouping*

Privateer 2: The Darkening

Use Alt-N to enter the navigations display during ship flight. Type f for find and then enter the following codes:

77. rep me up *Repairs ship armor and shields to 100 percent*
78. pety pety *Refilled afterburner fuel*
79. chill out *Reduces laser temperature to 0*
80. napalm *Get infinite nukes*
81. no talent *Invincibility*

The cheat codes last until you land at a station or planet.

STRATEGY

Age of Empires

Type these into the chat dialogue:

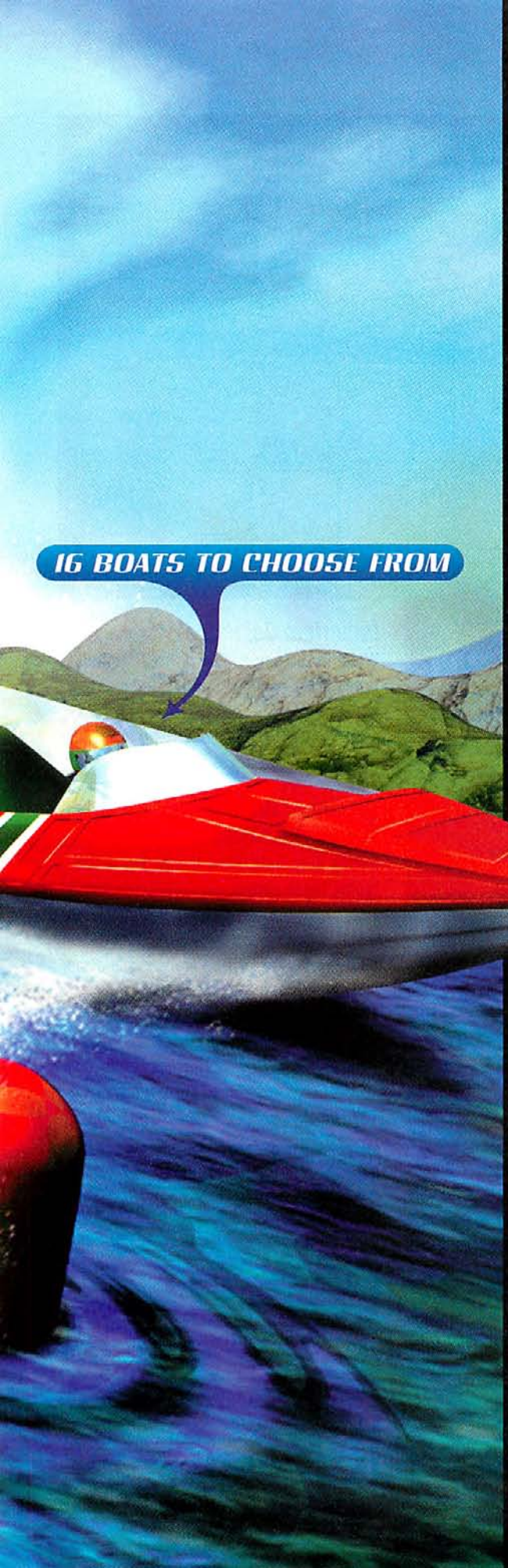
82. diediedie *All units die*
83. resign *You resign*
84. reveal map *Reveals the whole map*
85. pepperoni pizza *Gives 1000 food*
86. coinage *Gives 1000 gold*
87. woodstock *Gives 1000 wood*
88. quarry *Gives 1000 stone*



AGE OF EMPIRES What strange mounts hath the Shang unleased upon the Emperor's forces?


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PlayStation

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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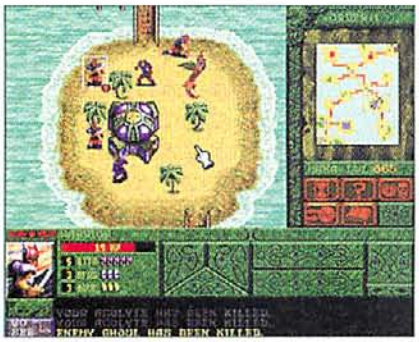


89. no fog *Removes the Fog of War*
90. hari kari *Commit suicide*
91. medusa *Villagers become medusas (when medusas die, they become black riders; when black riders die, they become heavy catapults)*
92. photon man *Gives you futuristic soldier*
93. gaia *Allows you to control animals*
94. flying dutchman *Changes your juggernauts into flying dutchmen, allowing them to fly over land*
95. steroids *Gives all units and all upgrades*
96. home run *You win scenario*
97. kill# *Defeats the player at starting position #*
98. bigdaddy *Gives you a guy in a car with a rocket launcher*

Birthright: The Gorgon's Alliance

During play, hit F3 and enter the following codes:

99. syncash *Gives you 500 gold bars*
100. synadv *To play any adventure*

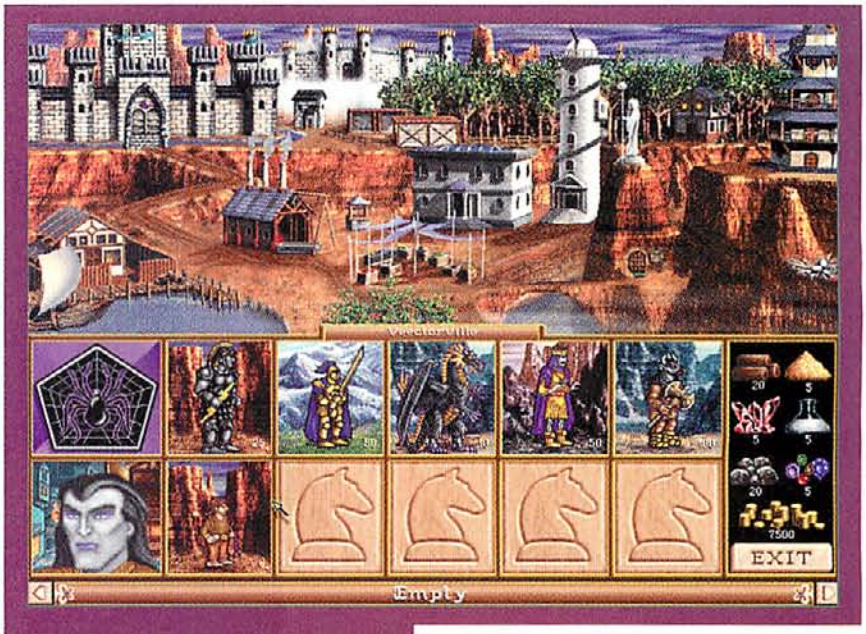


BLOOD AND MAGIC New creatures are a cheat away, but the computer gets one, too.

Blood and Magic

Hold down Alt while typing these codes. Any creatures you create will be given to the computer as well.

101. fog?whatfog? *Shows entire map*
102. boost *Maximum mana*
103. elminster *All research options*
104. shadow *Wraith*
105. body guard *Guardian*
106. smog *Wyrm*
107. yogi *Ranger*
108. concrete *Stone golem*
109. acolyte *Basal golem*
110. father *Cleric*



Heroes of Might & Magic II

Using the following codes will brand you a cheater after you win.

125. 911 *Instantly win current scenario*
126. 1313 *Instantly lose current scenario*
127. 32167 *Gives the selected hero five black dragons*
128. 8675309 *Reveals the entire map*
129. *To access the debug menu, add /NWC to your Heroes II command line. The final program command should read "Heroes2W.exe /NWC"*

111. wolverine *Druid*
112. fatal attraction *Fury*
113. flying monkeys *Gargoyle*
114. raise dead *Ghoul*
115. alaska *Gnome*
116. merv *Griffin*
117. needs food badly *Warrior*
118. merlin *Wizard*
119. dead flesh *Zombie*
120. microsquish *Juggernaut*

These three work only on the Harvest of Horrors levels when you play as Redfang the Reaper:

121. mother in law *Harpy*
122. gremlin *Enchanter*
123. jareth *Goblin*

Dungeon Keeper

124. During gameplay, press the **Enter** key on the numeric keypad for a cheat menu.

Imperium Galactica

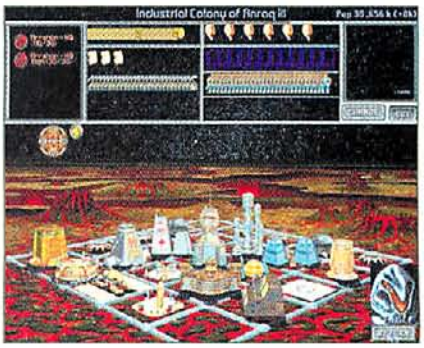
While in the game, hold down Shift and type karoly—this will activate the cheat codes.

130. c *All colonies and inventions*
131. v *Gives you 100,000 credits*

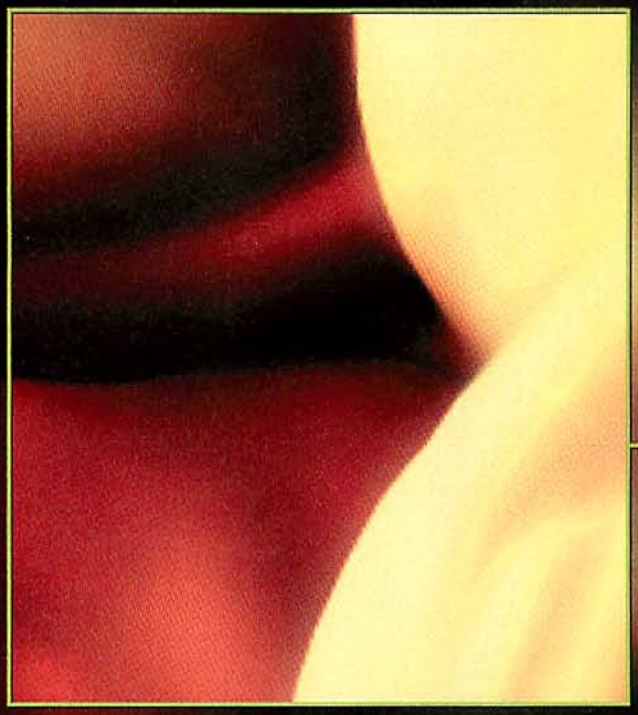
Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares

During play, hold down the Alt key while typing these codes:

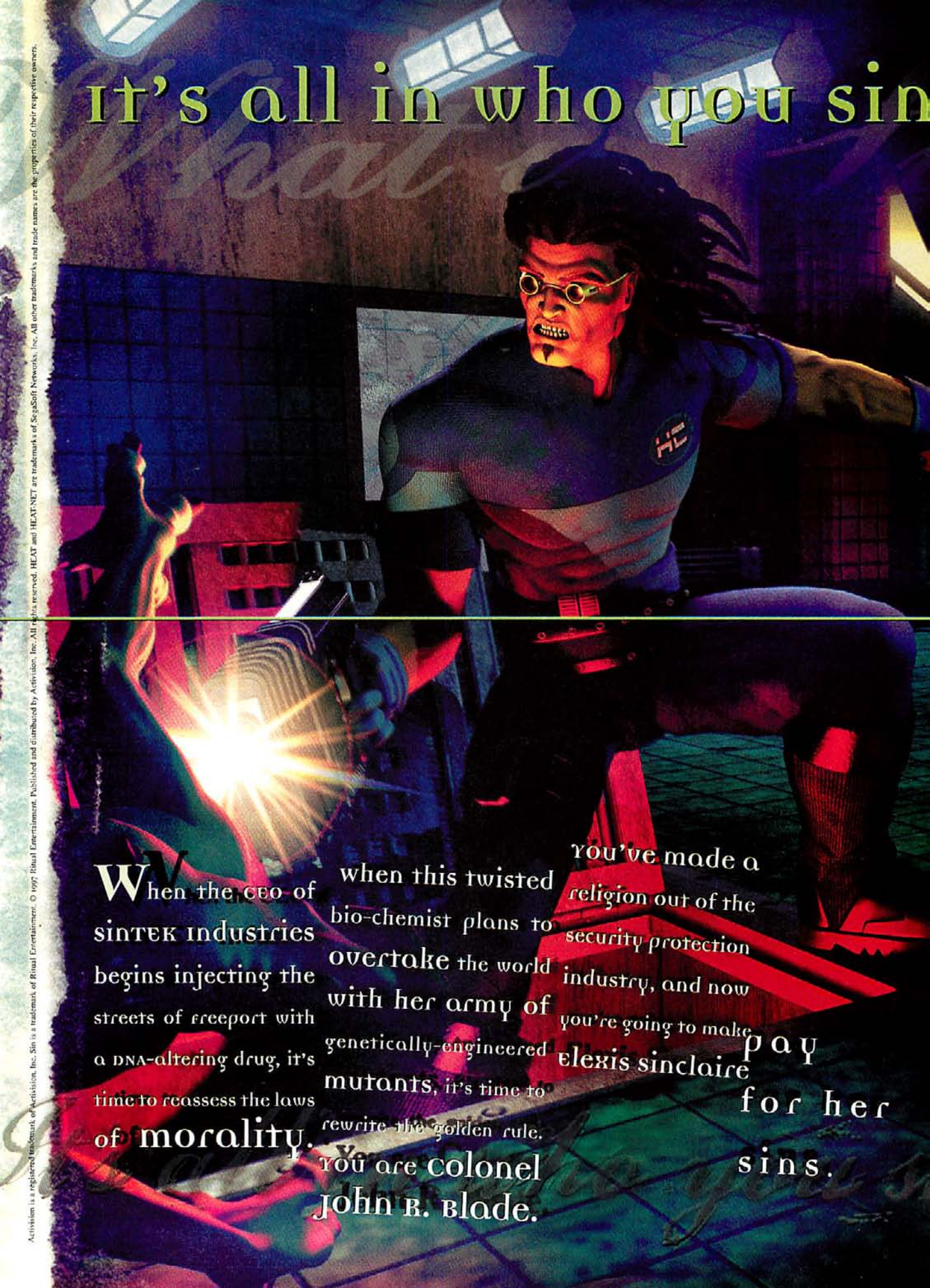
132. canbonly1 *Computer players unite against you*
133. crunch *Type at individual planet screen to finish current building project*
134. einstein *All technologies*
135. iseeall *Shows all planets and players*
136. menlo *Finishes researching current technology*
137. moola *Gives you 1000 BC*



MASTER OF ORION II A little help from Einstein can put you at the top of the technology tree.



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M.A.X.

138. maxammo *Full load of ammo*
139. maxsurvey *Reveals all resources*
140. maxspy *Reveals all enemies*
141. maxsuper *Allows chosen unit to be upgraded to level 30*
142. maxstorage *Fills raw material units' cargo completely*

Myth: The Fallen Lords

143. Hold the spacebar down while selecting the "New Game" option to select any mission.

NetStorm

During play, type this into the chat dialogue:

144. .cheatorama 8675309 *This will allow you to play any mission from the campaign and gives you a cheat menu for getting 10,000 Storm Power.*

Settlers 2

Type THUNDER to enable these codes in gameplay:

145. Alt-F7 *View the whole map*
146. Alt-1 through Alt-7 *Sets game speed*

Total Annihilation

These codes work only in multiplayer or skirmish modes. Access the message box and then enter the codes.

147. +atm *1,000 Metal and Energy*
148. +contour# *Shows 3D contour mesh #1–5 (use a number in the code instead of #)*
149. +dither *Dithering instead of line-of-sight*
150. +doubleshot *Twice the damage of all weapons*
151. +nowisee *Full map and disables line-of-sight*
152. +radar *100 percent radar coverage*



TOTAL ANNIHILATION A double shot of damage awaits the gamer who's willing to throw his honor aside and enter the world of slimy multiplayer cheaters.

War Wind

Hit Enter and type in the following cheats:

153. !golden boy *Gives money*
154. !the great pumpkin *Win campaign*
155. !the sun also rises *Shows everything*
156. !I am the bishop of battle *Win mission*
157. !show me the way *Map coordinates*
158. !on a mission from gawd *Workers build faster*
159. !oh come all ye faithful *Workers produce Fast-Inns faster*

X-Com: Apocalypse

There are two cheat activators, one for the cityscape and one for the tactical screen. To access either of them, hold down Alt at the main interface and type ufo cheat for the cityscape and tac cheat for the tactical screen. You should get a confirmation that the cheat mode has been activated. In all cases, Alt-Esc cancels cheat mode.

Cityscape codes

160. Alt-numpad + *Get one more of all equipment*
161. Alt-a *Autosave on/off*
162. Alt-b *Force base mission*
163. Alt-c *Force UFOs to crash*
164. Alt-d *Dimension map cheat on/off*
165. Alt-f *Build base facilities cheat on/off*
166. Alt-g *Test alien dimension*
167. Alt-m *Get $100,000*
168. Alt-n *Show number of aliens in buildings*
169. Alt-p *Finish project instantly on/off*
170. Alt-q *Allow all manufacture on/off*
171. Alt-r *Allow all research on/off*
172. Alt-s *Force overspawn*
173. Alt-t *Force apocalypse terror mission*
174. Alt-v *View ufopaedia on/off*
175. Alt-x *Get one of each vehicle*
176. Alt-z *Show all people tube connections*

Tactical codes

177. Alt-t *Training mode on/off*
178. Alt-k *Kill all hostile units*
179. Alt-w *Weightlessness on/off*
180. Alt i *Invincibility on/off*
181. Alt h *Hidden terrain on/off*
182. Alt v *Hidden units on/off*



MYTH Can't get past a particularly tough mission? Then just cheat your way to the next one.



ACTION

Abe's Oddysee

From the main screen, hold down Shift and type in the following codes using the arrow keys (u = up, d = down, l = left, r = right):

183. u l r l r l r d *View all movie scenes*
184. d r l r l r l u *Select any level*

Carmageddon

At the screen in which you select the map, vehicle, or start the race, type enable to enable the cheat mode—which will also give you access to all tracks and vehicles. During gameplay, press F4 to cycle through the modes until CHEAT MODE appears. Then the following cheats will become available:

208. F5 *Total repair*
209. F6 *Toggle invulnerability*
210. F7 *Adds 30 seconds to the timer*
211. F8 *Freeze/Unfreeze timer*
212. F10 *Increment lap counter*
213. F11 *Earn 5,000 credits instantly*
214. F12 *Switch between each opponent's camera and your own (external view only)*
215. Shift-F6 *Show opponents on map*
216. Shift-F7 *Adds 300 sec. to the timer*
217. Shift-F8 *Toggle shadows between none/your car only/all cars*
218. Shift-F10 *Increment checkpoint counter*
219. Shift-F11 *Lose 5,000 credits instantly*
220. Ctrl-F8 *Toggle shadows between solid(faster)/translucent*
221. Ctrl-Keypad 1 *Toggle fly mode*

For the above code, use normal movement keys. Keypad 5 places you on the ground (still flying). Keypad 9 and Keypad 6 change the car's pitch.

Blood

Press t; then type these codes:

185. bunz *All weapons (dual) and ammo*
186. capinmyass *God mode*
187. clarice *100 health*
188. edmark *Hurt yourself*
189. eva galli *Toggle clipping mode*
190. funky shoes *Jumping boots*
191. goonies *Shows the entire map*
192. griswold *Full armor*
193. hongkong *All weapons and unlimited ammo*
194. idaho *All weapons and full ammo*
195. jojo *Drunk mode*
196. kevorkian *Kill yourself*
197. keymaster *All keys*
198. krueger *Self Immolation*
199. mario *Level warp*
200. montana *All inventory items*
201. mpkfa *God mode*
202. nocapinmyass *Disables god mode*
203. rate *Displays framerate*
204. spork *200 health*
205. sterno *Fades in from a black screen*
206. tequila *Dual weapons*
207. voorhees *Short god mode*

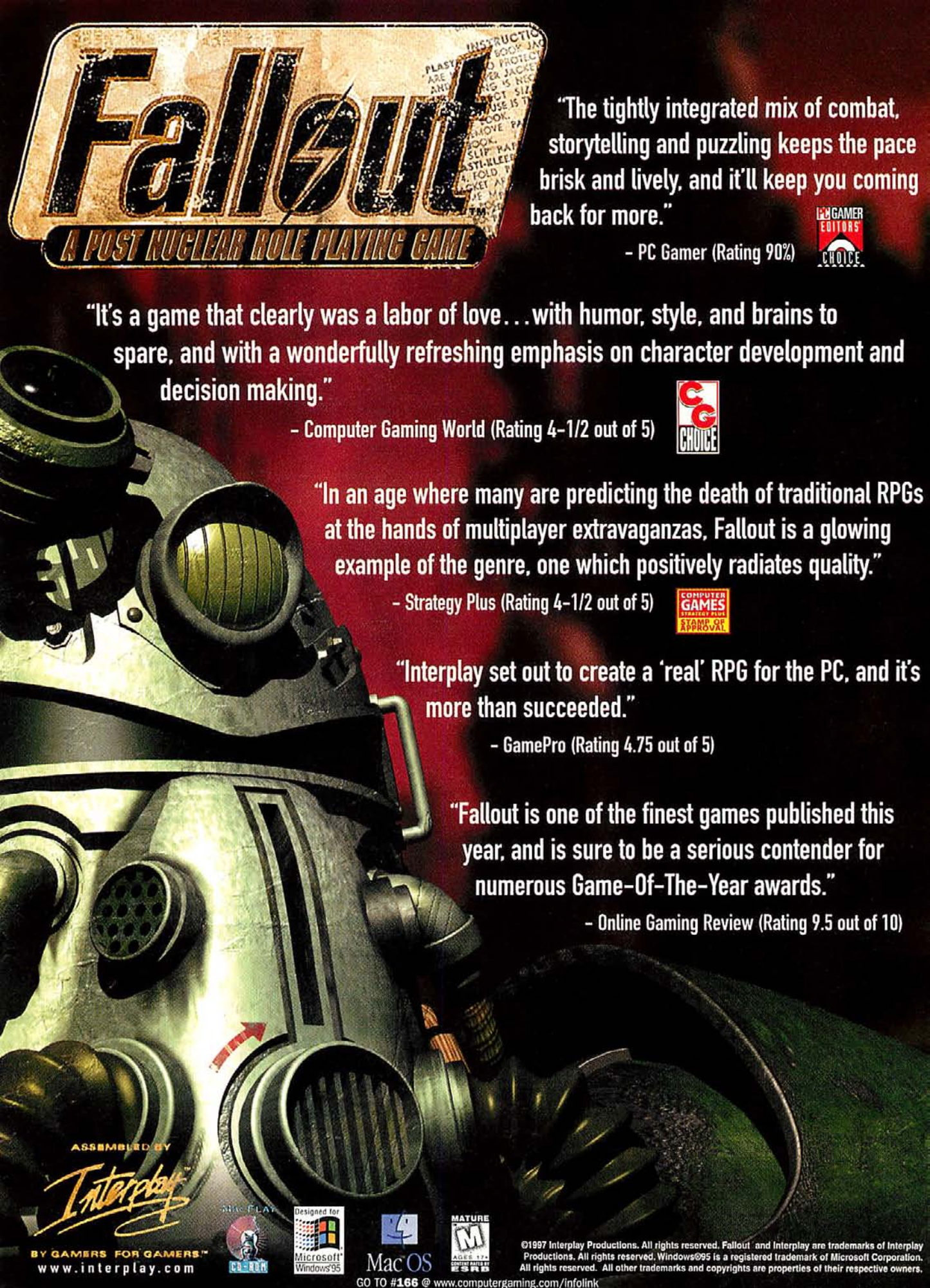


222. 0 *Bonus*
223. 1 *Mega Bonus*
224. 2 *Pedestrians glued to ground*
225. 3 *Giant pedestrians*
226. 4 *Explosive pedestrians*
227. 5 *Hot rod*
228. 6 *Turbo pedestrians*
229. 7 *Invulnerability*
230. 8 *Free repairs*
231. 9 *Instant repairs*
232. Shift-0 *Timer frozen*
233. Shift-1 *Underwater ability*
234. Shift-2 *Time bonus*
235. Shift-3 *Body work trashed*
236. Shift-4 *Blow yourself up*
237. Shift-5 *Frozen opponents*



CARMAGEDDON This game has more cheats than you can throw a bulldozer at.

238. Shift-6 *Frozen cops*
239. Shift-7 *Turbo opponents*
240. Shift-8 *Turbo cops*
241. Shift-9 *Gravity goes strange*
242. Alt-0 *Pinball mode*
243. Alt-1 *Wall climber*
244. Alt-2 *Bouncey-Bouncey*
245. Alt-3 *Jelly suspension*
246. Alt-4 *Pedestrians shown on map*
247. Alt-5 *Pedestrian extro-bastard ray*
248. Alt-6 *Greased tires*
249. Alt-7 *ACME damage magnifier*
250. Shift-Alt-2 *Instant handbrake*
251. Shift-Alt-4 *Turbo*
252. Shift-Alt-5 *Mega-Turbo*
253. Shift-Alt-6 *Blind pedestrians*
254. Shift-Alt-7 *Pedestrian respawn*
255. Shift-Alt-8 *5 free recovery vouchers*
256. Shift-Alt-9 *Solid granite car*
257. Ctrl-0 *Rock springs*
258. Ctrl-1 *Drugs*
259. Ctrl-2 *Grip-o-matic tires*
260. Ctrl-3 *Pedestrian harvest*



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Dark Forces: Jedi Knight

Press t to access the chat dialogue then type on to enable the cheats.
For the toggle cheats, 1 is on and 0 is off.

261. 5858lvr — *All map*
262. bactame — *Full health*
263. deeznuts — *Level skip*
264. eriamjh — *Fly mode*
265. imayoda — *Light master*
266. jediwannabe # — *Toggles God mode*
267. raccoonking — *All Force powers*
268. red5 — *All weapons*
269. sithlord — *Dark Master*
270. slowmo # — *Toggles slow motion*
271. thereisnotry — *End level*
272. wamprat — *All items*
273. whiteflag # — *Toggles AI*
274. yodajammies — *Gain Mana*



JEDI KNIGHT In the Baron's Head level, you'll find a familiar crazed bunny named Max.

Destruction Derby 2

Go to stock cars, championship mode, and enter your name as one of the following:

275. MACSrPOO — *Access to all tracks, stock cars, and wrecking racing*
276. ToNyPaRk — *For full-motion-video*
277. CREDITZ — *For animated credits*

Extreme Assault

Type oh dear at the main menu to enable these codes:

278. Alt-1 — *Full ammo*
279. Alt-2 — *Upgrades current weapon*
280. Alt-3 — *Full energy*
281. Alt-4 — *Invulnerability*
282. Alt-6 — *Completes mission*
283. Alt-7 — *Deactivates enemies*
284. Alt-8 — *Helicopter mode*
285. Alt-9 — *Tank mode*

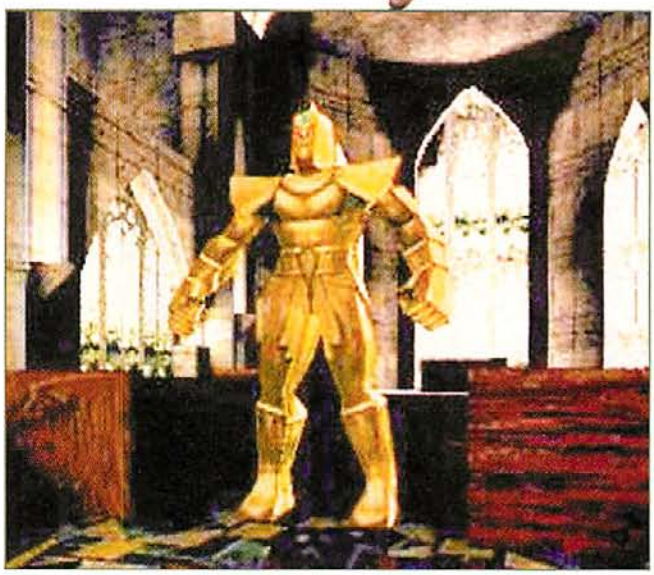
Hellbender

286. totlpwr — *100 percent energy*
287. urdead# — *Gives you weapon #*
288. maxmeup — *100 percent hull*
289. impumpd — *Gives you all weapons*
290. auntem# — *Warp to level #*
291. imstuck — *Skips current mission*

Hexen II

Type in these codes at the game console (accessed by pressing ~):

292. god — *God mode*
293. give h # — *Gives # amount of health*
294. impulse 9 — *All weapons and mana*
295. impulse 14 — *Sheep*
296. impulse 23 — *Torch*
297. impulse 25 — *Tome of power*
298. impulse 39 — *Fly*
299. impulse 40 — *Gain a level*
300. impulse 43 — *All weapons/mana items*
301. impulse 44 — *Throw item*
302. impulse 99 — *Restart game*
303. noclip — *Turns off clipping*
304. playerclass # — *Changes your class (where # is 1–4)*
305. name # — *Changes your name to whatever # is*
306. skill # — *Changes your skill level (where # is 0–3)*
307. notarget — *Enemies don't recognize you*



HEXEN II What action game would be complete without a god mode for showing off in front of your friends?

Hyperblade

308. mdmksb — *Increases attack ability and makes you more immune to opponent attacks*
309. potato — *Decreases character size*
310. shuin — *Enables a hidden team*
311. gorilla — *Gorilla characters*
312. spicybrains — *Upside-down characters*

Interstate '76

313. **This works only in TRIP missions. Hold down Ctrl and Shift while typing getdown. Now all the other cars will attack you. After you've been destroyed, you proceed to the next mission.**

Magic Carpet 2

Press i then type windy. Then enter the following codes.

314. Alt-F1 — *All spells*
315. Alt-F2 — *More mana*
316. Alt-F3 — *Destroys all players*
317. Alt-F4 — *Destroys all castles*
318. Alt-F5 — *Destroys all balloons*
319. Alt-F6 — *Heal*
320. Alt-F7 — *Kill all creatures*
321. Alt-F8 — *More experience points*
322. Alt-F9 — *Free spell usage on/off*
323. Alt-F10 — *Invulnerability on/off*
324. Shift-D — *Complete current objective*
325. Shift-C — *Complete level*

MDK

Go to the help screen with F1. Then type in these codes. Use Enter or Esc to continue playing. Because of many different versions of MDK, not all of the codes may work.

326. biggrenade — *Homing striper grenade*
327. healme — *Full health*
328. iliketolob — *Mortar*
329. ineedabiggun — *Gatt*
330. kill — *Suicide*
331. makemefull — *Health*
332. twistandshout — *Twist*

IT'S OPENING NIGHT IN THE THEATER OF BATTLE...

AND YOU'VE GOT A FRONT ROW





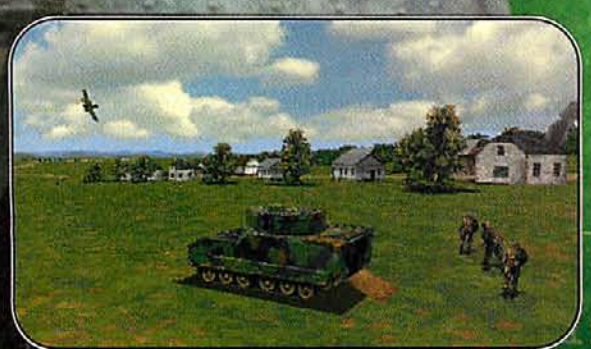
SEAT.

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Necrodome

Hit Enter-t during gameplay and then type in the following codes:

333. excalibur *Get all weapons*
334. smallrocks *Unlimited ammo*
335. rabbit *Full shields*
336. igotbetter *Full health*
337. gimmesomesugarbaby *Full gear and weapons*
338. swallow *Refuel your gas tank*
339. knight *God mode*
340. camelot *End the level*
341. runaway *Fire all weapons at once*
342. shrubbery *Get powerups*
343. antioch *Kill all enemies*
344. unladenswallow *Unlimited fuel*

Need for Speed II

Type in these codes at any menu screen:

345. armytruck *Army Truck*
346. bmw *BMW*
347. bus *Yellow school bus*
348. commanche *Commanche pickup truck*
349. drive29 *Monolithic Studios bus*
350. drive30 *Limousine*
351. drive31 *Citroen 2CV*
352. drive36 *Cart*
353. drive37 *Outhouse*
354. drive38 *T-Rex*
355. drive39 *Wagon*
356. drive40 *Souvenir stand 1*
357. drive41 *Souvenir stand 2*
358. drive42 *Souvenir stand 3*
359. drive43 *Log*
360. drive44 *Wooden crate*
361. drive45 *Monorail*
362. drive46 *Hover Police*
363. drive47 *UFO*
364. drive48 *Sewage truck*
365. drive49 *Snowy wooden box*
366. drive50 *Snowy wooden box 2*
367. hollywood *Bonus track*
368. jeepyj *Jeep YJ*
369. landcruiser *Toyota Landcruiser*
370. mercedes *Mercedes*
371. miata *Mazda Miata*
372. pioneer *Makes all secret cars faster*
373. quattro *Audi Quattro*
374. redracer *Ford Indigo*
375. semi *Big truck without trailer*
376. slip *Enables super slip 'n' slide mode*
377. snowtruck *Snow truck*
378. vanagon *VW Combi*
379. volvo *Volvo station wagon*
380. vwbug *VW Beetle*
381. vwfb *VW Fastback*
382. *Hold down* **n** *while the track is loading to race at night*



NEED FOR SPEED II When they said, "Drive a dinosaur," they didn't mean your '76 T-bird.

Outlaws

383. olairhead *Fly mode (use jump and crouch to move up and down)*
384. olappear *Makes boss appear*
385. olash *Unlimited ammo*
386. olbounce *Superjump mode*
387. olcds *Full map*
388. olether *Invisibility*
389. olfps *Displays frame rate*
390. olgps *Displays coordinates*
391. olgusher *Unlimited oil*
392. olimyella *God mode*
393. oljackpot *Adds inventory*
394. olpostal *All weapons and full ammo*
395. olredlite *Freeze enemies*
396. olscore *Skip level*
397. olscreening *Shows cut-scenes*
398. olstinnet *Gatling gun*
399. oltombstone *Suicide*
400. olwimpy *Autoreload*
401. olyahoo *Bronze badge*
402. olzip *Teleport*

Jump to level codes

403. olhideout
404. oltown
405. oltrain
406. olcanyon
407. olmills
408. olsimms
409. olminer
410. olcliff
411. olranch

Perfect Weapon

Enter these on the password screen to warp to that particular moon:

412. DBDBBABA *Ice*
413. ADDCAADC *Garden*
414. ACBABBCC *Forest*
415. ADDDCACC *Desert*
416. DDBDBBCA *Proteus*

Enter this code during gameplay for God mode:

417. gmgodm

Powerslave

418. lobocop *All weapons*
419. lobodeity *God mode*
420. loboswag *All items*
421. lobopick *All keys*
422. lobosphere *Entire map*
423. lobolite *Removes flash from explosion and gunfire*
424. loboxy *Displays coordinates*
425. holly *Gives a space at the top of the screen to enter the following codes:*
426. level # *Jumps to level numbered #*
427. doors *Opens all doors and activates all traps*
428. creature # *Places any one of the following creatures at your location (where # is 0–11)*
429. 0 *Anubis*
430. 1 *Spider*
431. 2 *Mummy*
432. 3 *Piranha*
433. 4 *Basset*
434. 5 *Magmantis*
435. 6 *Am-Nit*
436. 7 *Set*
437. 8 *Kilmatikhan*
438. 9 *Alien Worker*
439. 10 *Alien Worker*
440. 11 *Omen Wasp*

Redneck Rampage

441. rdelvis *God mode*
442. rdall *Gives all items and full health*
443. rdclip *Lets you walk through things*
444. rddebug *Toggles debug mode*
445. rdfuckngo#?? *Takes you to episode # and map ??*
446. rdguns *Gives all weapons*
447. rdinventory *Gives all inventory items*
448. rditems *Gives all items*
449. rdkeys *Gives all keys*

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Enlightening Entertainment
A Game by Trevor Chan

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450. **rdmonsters** *Toggles monsters on & off*
451. **rdrate** *Shows your current framerate*
452. **showmap** *Shows the full map*
453. **rdskill#** *Changes your skill level to level # (1-4)*
454. **rdunlock** *Toggles all the locks*
455. **rdview** *Chase plane view*

Scorched Planet

456. **fatal** *Loads your ship with full weapons and ammo*
457. **allah** *Invulnerability*

Quake II

Press the tilde (~) key to bring down the console, then type these codes:

458. **god** *God mode*
459. **notarget** *Enemies won't target you*
460. **noclip** *No clipping*
461. **give all** *All items and weapons*
462. **give shells** *Shotgun shells*
463. **give bullets** *Bullets*
464. **give cells** *Cells*
465. **give grenades** *Grenades*
466. **give rockets** *Rockets*
467. **give slugs** *Slugs*
468. **give invulnerability** *Temporary invulnerability*

Shadow Warrior

Press t to open the chat dialogue to type in these codes:

469. **swchan** *God mode*
470. **swghost** *No clipping mode*
471. **swgimme** *All inventory items*
472. **swgreed** *God mode, all items and ammo*
473. **swloc** *Displays the frame rate*
474. **swmap** *Full map on/off*
475. **swname** *Change name in multiplayer*
476. **swquit** *Quits the game*
477. **swres** *Changes the screen resolution*
478. **swstart** *Restarts a level*
479. **swtrek##** *Jumps to level number ##*
480. **swtrix** *Bunny rocket mode*
481. **winpachinko** *Win at the Pachinko machines*

SkyNET

To use the following cheats, press Alt-\ and then type in the code.

482. **arnold** *Gives all weapons, but no ammo*
483. **slugs** *Gives you all the ammo*
484. **superuzi** *Gives you the superuzi*
485. **surgery** *Gives you full health*
486. **illbeback** *Warps to the next level*
487. **willnotstop** *Invulnerability*
488. **garble** *Turns on/off cheat code garble*
489. **target** *Gives you a targeting box on enemies*
490. **icantsee** *Gives you an infrared targeting scope with zoom*

HOTTEST CHEATS FOR HELLFIRE!

We didn't think 501 cheats were enough so we went the extra mile to get these super secret cheats for DIABLO's expansion, HELLFIRE.

Create a file called command.txt using the Windows notepad. In the file, use the following words to create the listed effect. Save the file to the Hellfire directory.

BARDTEST *This enables the partially completed Bard character. The stats are there, but it looks the same as the Rogue. This class allows you to use two single-handed weapons, and the benefit will quickly become apparent when you fight two enemies side by side.*

THEOQUEST *A little girl appears in the village. Complete her quest and get a treasure.*

COWQUEST *Here's the big one! This code removes the farmer and puts in a wacky cow. The cow gives you a quest, but only if you're at a high enough level. When you get the bovine armor, be sure to wear it when you face Na-Krul.*



By the time you read this, there should be a patch that fixes the bugs in Hellfire and gives you this additional code:

BARBARIANTEST *The Barbarian character class! No magic ability, but has high stats and can wield two-handed weapons in one hand!*

Moto Racer

Enter these at the name input screen and press Enter.

491. **cdnalsi** *Gives access to all tracks*
492. **cesrever** *To race all tracks in reverse mode*
493. **ctekcop** *To race all tracks on "pocket" bikes*

Tomb Raider

Hold down the Shift key and take one step forward, then one step backward. Release Shift and turn 360 degrees to your right three times. Then...

494. **Jump backward** *Get all the weapons*
495. **Jump forward** *Beat the current level and go to the next one*

Tomb Raider II

496. *Repeat the steps for TOMB RAIDER except this time, have a flare in your hand.*

WipeOut XL

497. **rush** *Silly ships*
498. **xclass** *Phantom class*
499. **xteam** *Piranha team*
500. **xtrack** *All tracks*



WIPEOUT XL A keyboard code will get you easy access to all the tracks in the game.

Super Special Cheat Code for WarCraft 2

Enter this code on the main menu screen

501. **game over man**

This gives you the full version of STARCRAFT, which was really ready for release when WARCRAFT 2 came out (Blizzard was just building up the anticipation, and the design team for STARCRAFT has been in Hawaii the past two years).

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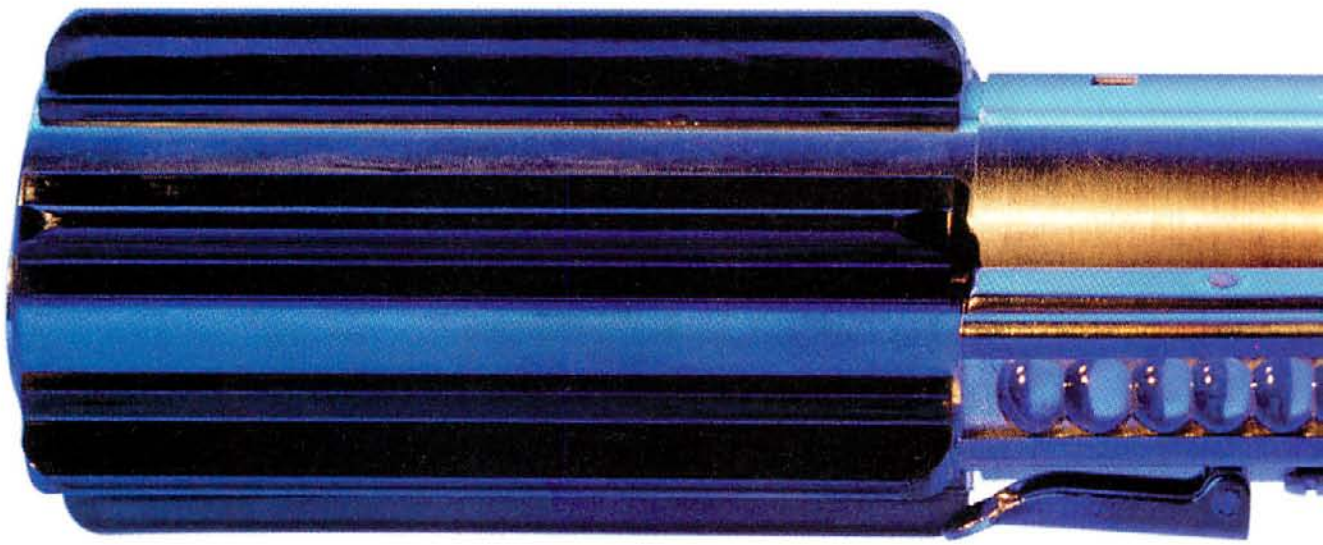
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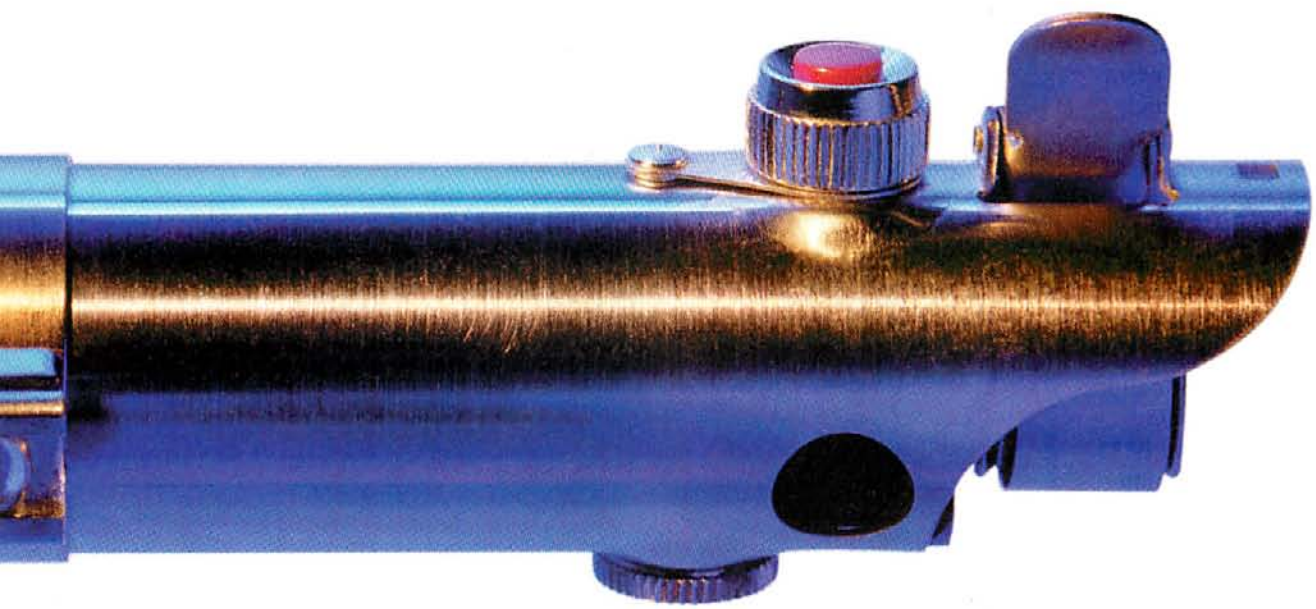
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CGW Presents

The Best & Worst of 1997



The announcement is punctuated with applause, cheers, and delighted screams. A spotlight swoops past pre-assigned seats to crown its target with a luminous corona. Music swells into a symphonic cliché that would make even Barry Manilow proud. The winner walks briskly to the podium with visions of thanking God, Mom, and investment bankers dancing in his or her head. That's how most people think of awards ceremonies, and frankly, it's a lot of hooey.

Awards legitimate singular artistic efforts. At their best, they encourage one to try an overlooked product. At their worst, they heap extra hype on commercially successful products. As humans, though, we like awards and await our chance for recognition. We can't resist arguing the worthiness and unworthiness of other people's choices.

Each year, the editors of *Computer Gaming World* present the BEST game in each gaming genre along with the ONE game that transcends its genre and opens up new worlds and experiences to gamers of other styles. This year, we're also presenting the WORST gaming experiences from 1997. And the best part is, you don't have to sit through long dance numbers and ill-prepared acceptance speeches to find out who won! And the winners are...

Jedi Knight



In a secret ballot vote, the *CGW* Editorial Staff voted almost unanimously (except for one GETTYSBURG fan) to give the 1998 Premier Award for Game of the Year to LucasArts' JEDI KNIGHT, designed by Justin Chin. This award is given to the game that transcends all genres, presents innovative design ideas, and offers a thoroughly rewarding gaming experience—requirements that JEDI KNIGHT wholeheartedly fulfills.

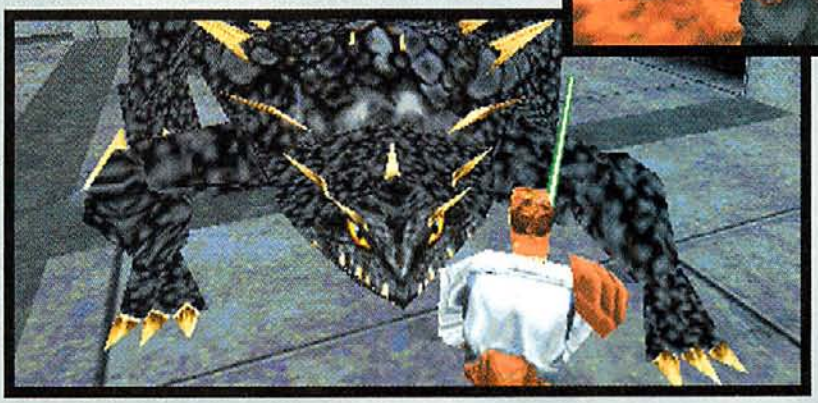
JEDI KNIGHT introduced a host of new design concepts into the first-person action genre, helping to elevate it above the other 3D shooters in the market. The two chief elements that set JEDI KNIGHT apart are its integrated plot and its character development. It was the first action game to tightly integrate the story into the gameplay, with cut-scenes that flowed straight into in-game action and multiple-objective-based levels that fit into the story. There have been other attempts to meld story and gameplay together in action games, but none ever approached JEDI's level.



The character development in JEDI KNIGHT also vaulted it ahead of the pack and beyond just the sights of action gamers. How many of us have wanted the chance to learn the Force or join the Dark Side? You can do both in JEDI, and you can do so on an immersive level that actually makes you care about your character's choices. It's a role-playing convention that's done better here than in other role-playing games.



Besides the plot and character development, JEDI offered a host of other features that cemented its place as 1997 Game of the Year. Take, for example, the amazing level design and clever puzzles, the hair-raising lightsaber duels with the Dark Jedi, the almost cinematic way in which the game set up those duels of good versus evil, and the immersion in the *Star Wars* universe. The graphics were good, multiplayer was fun, and the music (of course) was first-rate.



While QUAKE II delivers a more visceral adrenaline rush, JEDI KNIGHT offers a much richer single-player experience. As did DIABLO the year before, JEDI rose above the crowd in appealing to gamers across all genres. The Force was definitely with LucasArts when they made JEDI KNIGHT, DARK FORCES II.

ACTION GAME OF THE YEAR

Quake II





Action games were in a pivotal evolutionary phase this year. There weren't as many quality titles to play, but what good games did exist were head-and-shoulders above last year's best. The action genre has never lacked for excellent multiplay, but solo action has suffered egregiously of late. This was the year to fix that nagging disability, and our nominees provided incredible solo experiences in addition to their great multiplay. Of these nominees, the award goes to QUAKE II. Why? Because this is an *action* award, and for pure adrenaline-pumping, visceral, instantly gratifying action, QUAKE II is the hands-down winner. No game gave us the rush that QUAKE II did. It even had a good single-player component, with unit-based levels, multi-level missions, and little extras (such as radio chatter) to deepen the immersion.



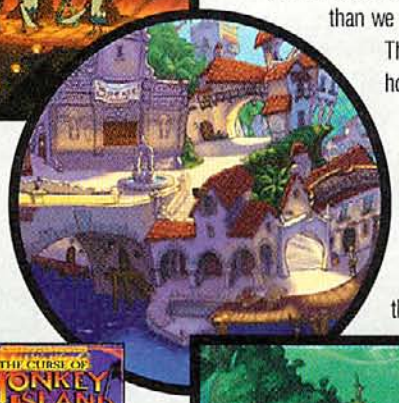
INTERSTATE '76 was more stylish and original, but it suffered a lack of good 3D support and an irritating save feature. If both of those problems had been addressed, you might be looking at a different awards ceremony. G-POLICE was the most beautiful of all these games, but its lack of multiplay hobbled its chances for an award. As for JEDI, we think it *is* a better *overall* game than QUAKE II, especially in its story-telling, drama, and immersion. That's why it, and not QUAKE II, is our Game of the Year. But when we asked ourselves which action game delivered the purest rush for hard-core action gamers, we came back to QUAKE II.

OTHER ACTION FINALISTS:
G-Police Psygnosis
Interstate '76 Activision
Jedi Knight LucasArts

ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR

Curse of Monkey Island









It turned out to be a surprisingly good year for adventure games. While everybody (including *CGW*) was busy bemoaning the sad state of the genre, by year's end, we had more nominees than we could have imagined.

There is one adventure game, however, that clearly stood out as an unqualified triumph: LucasArts' THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND, the long-awaited third installment in the ongoing story of doofus pirate Guybrush Threepwood. Like all the great LucasArts adventures, THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND is an animated, 2D comic romp that combines challenging, inventory-based puzzle solving with unabashedly goofy cartoon humor.

Simply everything is done right in this game: lush graphics, outstanding voice-acting, strong storyline, clever puzzles, and, best of all, a script with more big laughs in it than just about anything at the movies these days. It is, easily, the most entertaining adventure in years, and is our hands-down winner.

Our other nominees are also quite good. Westwood's BLADE RUNNER is a remarkable-looking, faithful adaptation of the classic sci-fi film. Red Orb's THE LAST EXPRESS, the year's best mystery, is a stylish and intriguing period piece set on the eve of WWI. Activision's TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is a charming 3D action/adventure hybrid. And Activision's ZORK GRAND INQUISTOR is a wonderful return to form, with the best humor this side of MONKEY ISLAND.

OTHER ADVENTURE FINALISTS:
Blade Runner Westwood
The Last Express Red Orb
Twinsen's Odyssey Activision
Zork Grand Inquisitor Activision

Role-Playing GAME OF THE YEAR

Fallout

Well, this is an easy one. The Role-Playing Game of the Year is FALLOUT, Interplay's masterful postapocalyptic epic, which is so good that we didn't even bother to nominate any other games. And though it had no serious competition, it's safe to say that FALLOUT would have won this award no matter how many other nominees there were, because this is quite simply the best RPG to hit the PC in years.

Dubbed the "spiritual successor" (as opposed to sequel) to the seminal RPG WASTELAND, FALLOUT places you 200 years in the future, where you must cope with a nightmarish post-holocaust world of radiation, giant scorpions, badass mutant zombies, and more.

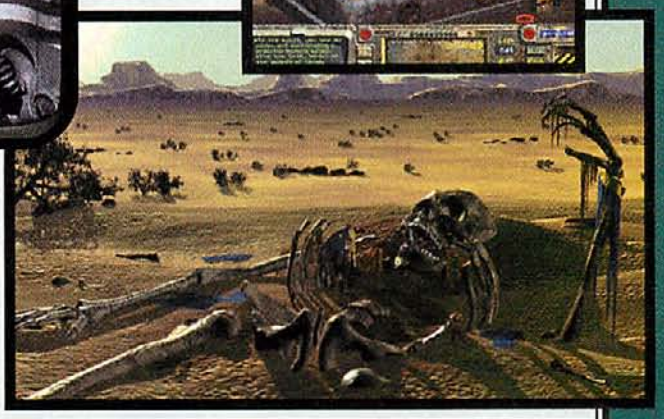
There's a lot to praise—the stylish, kitschy art design; the challenging quests; the intelligent dialogue—but what puts this game over is its deep commitment to character development, in which your decisions and actions seriously affect the outcome of the game. FALLOUT is an obvious labor of love from a team that really knows RPGs, and their enthusiasm permeates every aspect of the game, down to the load screens and awesome manual.





The other role-playing games released this year—BETRAYAL IN ANTARA, LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY, SHADOWS OVER RIVA—each had its moments, but each had huge problems as well, and certainly none came close to the vision, inspiration, and artistic accomplishment of FALLOUT.





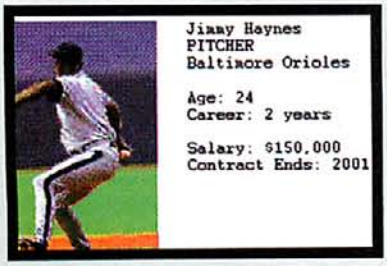
Sports GAMES OF THE YEAR

Baseball Mogul



While the real world was full of boxers biting ears and hoopsters choking coaches, the PC sports world was a much saner place to be in 1997. A number of great new games came out, but two really caught our eye. With no real way to compare them, we are honoring them both as Sports Games of the Year.

BASEBALL MOGUL is about as humble as games get, but it was more original than any sports title this year, putting you in charge of a ball club and challenging you to do what all owners want to do most: Make money. The focus was not on action, but on the strategy, intrigue, and back-room politics that form much of the drama of professional sports. It isn't for everyone, but for armchair coaches and fantasy freaks, it's the year's sleeper hit.

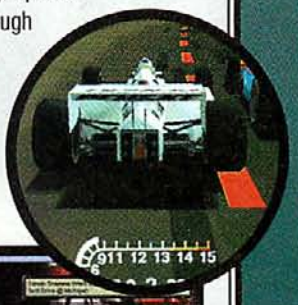


CART Racing



Microsoft continued to redeem its name with gamers with CART PRECISION RACING, a high-octane, surprisingly well-done racing simulation. With state-of-the-art graphics, Internet play, and incredibly deep options that scale the game from novice play through hard-core realism, CART offers the spiffiest high-tech sports thrills of the year.

Our other nominees were also great. NHL 98 and NBA LIVE 98 were the latest and best entries in EA's awesome action-oriented franchises, while LINKS LS 98 made the world's best golf simulation even better.





OTHER SPORTS FINALISTS:
Links LS 98 Access Software
NHL 98 Electronic Arts
NBA Live 98 Electronic Arts


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Simulation GAME OF THE YEAR

OTHER SIM FINALISTS:
F-22 ADF Digital Image Design
Flight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass

Longbow 2



For the second year in a row, Origin's Skunkworks team walks away with a Premier Award for a game based on the AH-64D Longbow. LONGBOW 2, the sequel to last year's winner, maintains all the elements that made LONGBOW special, including authentic flight models, realistic instrumentation, and widely adjustable skill levels that make the game accessible to beginners and combat aviation fanatics alike.



Building on that solid foundation, the team added a dynamic battlefield that ensures you'll never repeat the same mission twice. There's more action on the ground and in the air, and the addition of two new helicopters to fly brings new tactics into play. The game looks great on most systems, and is absolutely dazzling on PCs with 3Dfx Voodoo graphics cards. On top of all that, cooperative and combative multiplayer modes let players share the duties of piloting the chopper and handling its weapons. Authentic, exciting, immersive, and graphically dazzling, this is a sim that transcends its genre.

DID's F-22 AIR DOMINANCE FIGHTER, the follow-up to 1995 Premier Award–winner EF2000, featured dazzling graphics, great flight modeling, and immersive missions, which made this game not only authentic, but *fun* as well. Had it not omitted a mission editor, it might have edged out LONGBOW 2. FLIGHT UNLIMITED 2, the first aviation sim to truly capture the *environment* of real civilian flying, deserves a nod as well.



Space Sim GAME OF THE YEAR

Wing Commander Prophecy







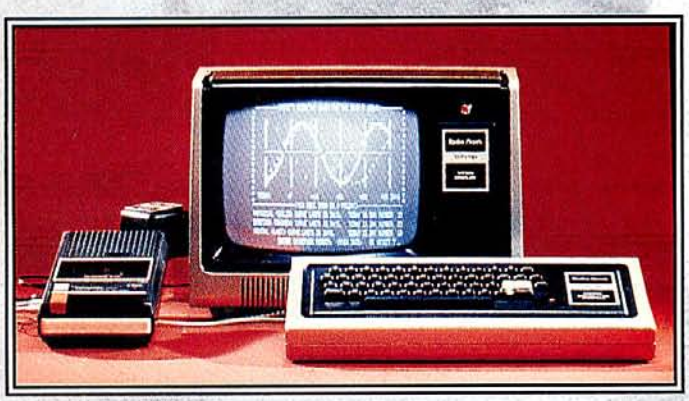
Face it: Only the most starry-eyed gamers could possibly consider this year a great one for space sims. 10TH PLANET never shipped, and STARFLEET ACADEMY should have shipped a year earlier. The Euro-hit I-WAR would surely be a contender, but it won't ship in the U.S. until late spring.

So it was left to Origin/EA to not just salvage a tired genre, but reinvent it in the process. Not only would WING COMMANDER PROPHECY have won Best Space Sim in any recent year, it was also one of the few serious contenders to JEDI KNIGHT as this year's overall Game of the Year. PROPHECY sports tremendous graphics that look great rendered merely via software. With 3Dfx support, you'll hardly believe your eyes, as the in-flight action looks better than the cut-scenes in most other games.

PROPHECY is more than mere eye-candy. The gameplay, featuring a new, creepy alien race, is easily the most engrossing since WING II—the missions were designed before the movie, and it shows. Even the full-motion video segments actually enhance, rather than detract from, the flow of the game, because what you see is dependent on how well you perform in the mission: PROPHECY has multiple levels of victory or defeat, another departure from previous WING COMMANDERS.

Yes, PROPHECY pushes your hardware (nothing new for WING COMMANDER), but it's also as close to *Babylon 5* as we're likely to get on a PC anytime soon. For the detractors upset about the removal of promised multiplayer options, well, we'll take a compelling story, good characters, and classic WING COMMANDER wrist-wracking action over the empty single-player experience of X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER any day.

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THE WORLD
WITH A
TRS-80.



{ TRS-80 circa 1983
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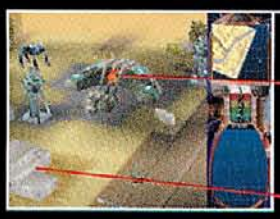
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Missile Launcher


Shuttle

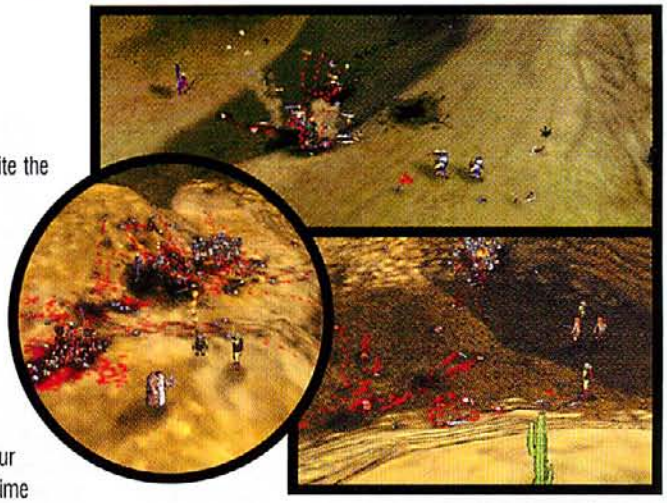

MK4 Walker

Metro Goldwyn Mayer
MGM INTERACTIVE

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Strategy GAME OF THE YEAR

Myth



This was a good year for real-time games, even despite the number of ugly COMMAND & CONQUER clones that hit the shelves. The good real-time games of the year were more sophisticated, better-looking, and more fun. Yet, while all the other nominees were evolutionary steps in gameplay with the same C&C look, one game that stood out for its originality was Bungie's MYTH. TOTAL ANNIHILATION did 3D terrain well, but MYTH blew that out of the water with its undulating hills, exploding craters, and obtrusive tree tops—this was true 3D terrain that got in your face. Sure, AGE OF EMPIRES added more depth to your real-time building options, but Bungie went an entirely new route by including only tactical gameplay; there's no building, just fighting. And to make sure that the fighting was as sophisticated as possible, formations were added; when combined with terrain considerations, it made for a deeper tactical wargame than any other real-time strategy title. WARLORDS III had a good role-playing, fantasy feel, but it couldn't beat MYTH's originality or personality. Even DUNGEON KEEPER lost in that respect (its dated look didn't help either).

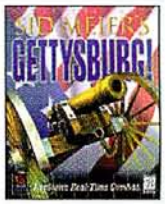


But what sealed MYTH's award was its single-player experience. Bungie created the best single-player strategy game of the year. The carryover of heroes, the voice-overs and NPCs in actual scenario play, and the great back-story all combined to create an immersive single-player package that was the most compelling of all strategy games.

OTHER STRATEGY FINALISTS:
Age of Empires Ensemble/Microsoft
Total Annihilation Cavedog/GT Interactive
Warlords III SSG/Red Orb
Dungeon Keeper Bullfrog

Wargame GAME OF THE YEAR

Sid Meier's Gettysburg



It was a year of sequels like no other—because the majority of sequels were surprisingly good. For the first time since the advent of the original HARPOON, real-time wargames proved that they were here to stay, comprising exactly half of our finalists. ACHTUNG! SPITFIRE, a real-time/turn-based hybrid, was simply the best BATTLE OF BRITAIN game ever. A BRIDGE TOO FAR improved in every way over Atomic's original CLOSE COMBAT. NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA sent the BATTLEGROUND engine out in style, and PANZER GENERAL II is a clinic in how to properly develop a sequel.



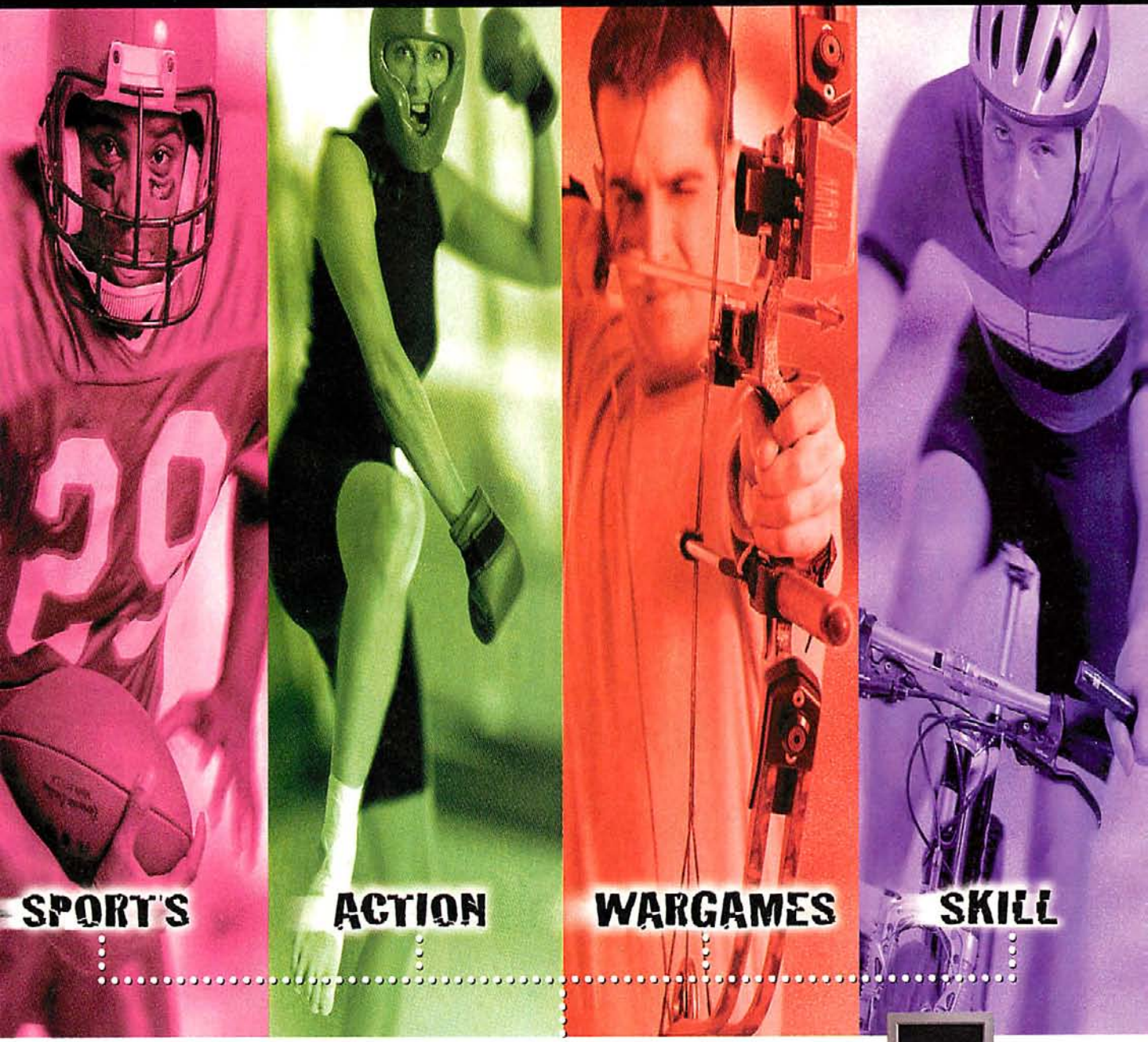




All of these fine games might have won the award in any other year. But 1997 marked the return to form of arguably the best designer ever. SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG might not be as painstakingly accurate as TalonSoft's BATTLEGROUND games, but it delivers a potent Civil War punch. Everything contributes to the period flavor, from the strains of martial music to the panoramic sweep of the formations as they move toward famous objectives such as Devil's Den. Not only do you see the battle unfold as Lee or Meade might have, you even find yourself listening for trumpet calls to give a clue concerning enemy maneuvers. The tutorials are among the best you'll find in any genre, and the random maps and multiplayer options ensure that this is one game that really *will* play until Johnny comes marching home.

OTHER WARGAME FINALISTS:
Achtung! Spitfire Avalon Hill
Close Combat 2: A Bridge Too Far Microsoft
Napoleon in Russia TalonSoft
Panzer General II SSI

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BUNGIE

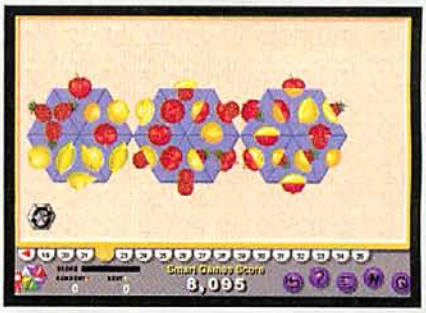
myth
THE FALLEN LORDS

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Puzzle
GAME OF THE YEAR

Smart Games Challenge 2





Smart Games whetted our appetites with snackettes such as WORD PUZZLES and STRATAJAMS, but nothing quite matched the original—until now. Instead of merely reinventing old puzzles or adapting classics to the electronic medium, CHALLENGE 2 offers a few classics of its own. Our favorite is *Polf*, a delightful cross between golf and pool that requires you to hit balls into golf-holes, using the most suitable pool-cue for the job. And then there's *Say What*, a musical jigsaw puzzle in which you must reorder snippets of music to form a well-known arrangement. Aware that Berkeley Systems had cornered the trivia market, but nonetheless wanting to honor fans' requests for a trivia collection, Smart Games also included *Gates of Trivia*, thousands of questions that we guarantee will have you running for your encyclopedia. Once again, Smart Games goes for substance rather than flash. But with brain-shattering puzzles like these, who needs fluff?



YOU DON'T KNOW JACK MOVIES, Berkeley's fourth installment of its hilarious party game, came a close second, this time aiming its caustic arrow at movie institutions like LucasFilm and 20th Century Fox. Berkeley also ventured into cyberspace with ACROPHOBIA, an online game in which you must invent the most apt definition for an acronym in a given category. And finally, LOSE YOUR MARBLES was the best TETRIS clone we've seen since last year's winner, BAKU BAKU.

OTHER PUZZLE FINALISTS:
You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems
Acrophobia Berkeley Systems
Lose Your Marbles SegaSoft

Hardware
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Canopus Pure 3D

This year has seen its fair share of outstanding hardware. We saw the coming of age of 2D/3D graphics accelerators that now hit on all cylinders, not trading one for the other. There were also some impressive strides made on the audio front, both in and out of the box. Positional 3D-audio established a beachhead, and is poised to make further inroads in 1998. Multimedia speakers have also improved markedly, with solid units available for $100.

> "This year's award goes to a 3D graphics board whose chip-set is over a year old..."

Yet ironically, despite these advances, this year's award goes to a 3D graphics board whose chipset is over a year old, and is the same chipset that garnered two boards this same award last year. This year, it's Canopus' Pure 3D, based on 3Dfx's venerable 3Dfx chipset. Pure 3D distinguishes itself by providing 6MB of onboard memory, and a TV-out that actually looks good. It runs Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide, covering gamers on all fronts. In addition, Canopus brings it home for under $200.



Other honorable mentions go to Cambridge SoundWorks' PC Works, a terrific satellite/woofer set of speakers with great sound for $100. Diamond's Stealth II, based on Rendition's V2100 chip, made solid 2D/3D performance affordable, and its MonsterSound was also in the running for helping to get the 3D positional-audio party started. The RIVA 128 chip from nVidia made big waves this year, appearing on myriad boards from a host of board-makers, including Diamond, ASUS, and STB.

OTHER HARDWARE FINALISTS:
PC Works Cambridge SoundWorks
Stealth II Diamond
MonsterSound Diamond
RIVA 128 nVidia

Special Award: Outstanding Multiplay

Age of Empires

It was a very good year for multiplayer games. There was JEDI KNIGHT, INTERSTATE '76, HEROES II: PRICE OF LOYALTY, SCOURGE OF ARMAGON, and QUAKE II. But one game in particular burrowed deep in our brainstems, luring us back again and again. Almost every day at six o'clock, work ceases at *CGW*, and AGE OF EMPIRES begins.

Few people can resist Age's outstanding combination of graphics, sound, and gameplay. There is enough variety in the different civilizations, maps, and victory conditions to ensure that no two multiplayer games are alike. But the heart of the game is its close-range melee combat, which is accessible and exciting for every kind of player. As a single-player game, AGE is interesting, but as a multiplayer game it's outstanding.



Special Award: Artistic Achievement

I-'76

While most computer games this year looked to the future or distant past—or created a fantasy world of their own—for their inspiration, one game this year immersed us instead in one of the most alien settings imaginable: the 1970s.

The idea behind INTERSTATE '76—an "auto-combat simulation" set in an alternate universe 1970s—was good enough, but the extent to which the game's designers realized their vision elevated it into the realm of the ultra-cool. With state-of-the-art 3D graphics; a Mad Maxian script infused with bravado and style; and a silky, bass-heavy funk soundtrack, INTERSTATE '76 shook the gaming world's collective booty. Yeah, the action rocked, but all of the chrome, including the hilarious opening credits and wonderfully cinematic cutscenes, put I-'76 over the top. And that's the way, uh-huh uh-huh, we like it.



Special Award: Musical Achievement



Outlaws

In OUTLAWS, Clint Bajakian has composed the most atmospheric soundtrack possible. Paying homage to the musical scores from Clint Eastwood's archetypal spaghetti westerns—with their attendant whistles, guitar strums, and vocal grunts—the evocative soundtrack seamlessly integrates themes for specific locales, game situations, and cinematic transition scenes to provide maximum aural satisfaction.



Special Award: Add-On Pack

Quake Mission Pack No. 1:

Scourge of Armagon



This was a good year for expansion packs. We played some great games, and when we were done, companies like Rogue, Cyberlore, and Ritual came in and gave us some more. Of all the expansions to all the games, though, one stands out in our minds: Ritual's QUAKE MISSION PACK 1: SCOURGE OF ARMAGON.



Simply put, this expansion, alone among all others, was actually much better than its original game. The levels were better in ARMAGON than in QUAKE, and the DeathMatch level was arguably the best we have ever seen. There were many other stellar expansion packs this year, including HEROES II: THE PRICE OF LOYALTY, RED ALERT: AFTERMATH, and CIV II: FANTASTIC WORLDS, but none succeeded in taking its original game to the next level quite as well as Ritual's SCOURGE OF ARMAGON.

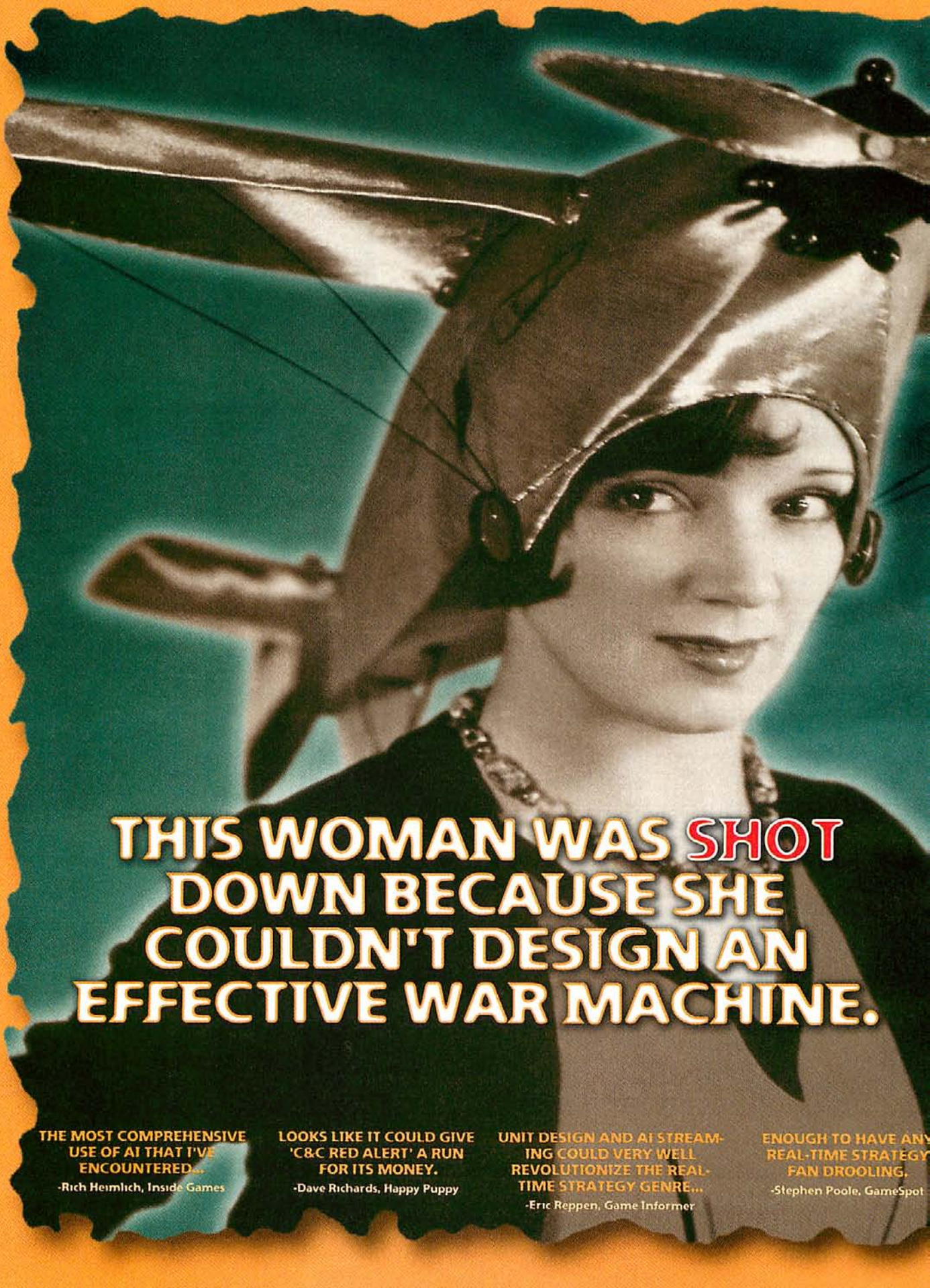
OTHER ADD-ONS FINALISTS:

Quake MP 2: Dissolution of Eternity
Rogue/Activision

Heroes II: Price of Loyalty
New World Computing

Red Alert: Aftermath Westwood

Civ II: Fantastic Worlds MicroProse


THIS WOMAN WAS SHOT DOWN BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T DESIGN AN EFFECTIVE WAR MACHINE.
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-Rich Heimlich, Inside Games
LOOKS LIKE IT COULD GIVE 'C&C RED ALERT' A RUN FOR ITS MONEY.
-Dave Richards, Happy Puppy
UNIT DESIGN AND AI STREAMING COULD VERY WELL REVOLUTIONIZE THE REAL-TIME STRATEGY GENRE...
-Eric Reppen, Game Informer
ENOUGH TO HAVE ANY REAL-TIME STRATEGY FAN DROOLING.
-Stephen Poole, GameSpot

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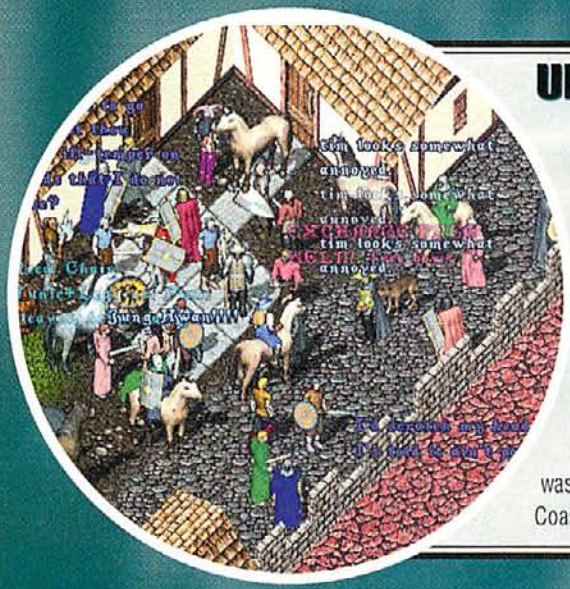
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WORST OF THE YEAR

Games that promised us the world, but ended up giving us the willies



Ultima Online

COASTER Of The Year

First, let's acknowledge that there were plenty of lousier games in 1997 than ULTIMA ONLINE. Take SOLDIER BOYZ—please. But ULTIMA ONLINE gets our booby prize for one reason: No game came into 1997 with greater hype, anticipation, and promise than this one, only to be so utterly disappointing.

UO was cynically shoved onto the market, with a hefty price tag *and* a monthly connection fee, by publishers who were well aware that the game was not even remotely complete. Given the huge lag problems, bugs, and sheer unplayability, Origin owed it to gamers to first, acknowledge—publicly, immediately—that the game was a beta, and second, waive the monthly connection fees indefinitely until the game was playable.

We hope that ULTIMA ONLINE will one day prove to be great. But in 1997 it was foisted prematurely upon the gaming public, and for that it is *CGW*'s Coaster of the Year.

ACTION Coaster

MAGESLAYER (Raven): This top-down shooter was ill-conceived in design and an utter disaster in implementation.



PUZZLE Coaster

CLUE (Hasbro Interactive): The company should have *bought* a clue before releasing this unplayable clunker.



SIM/SPACE SIM Coaster

G-NOME (7th Level): This game was a wonderful simulation—of what happens when you drop total morons into the cockpits of giant robots.

SPORTS Coaster

NFL LEGENDS 98 (Accolade): So you got to play bad football in four different eras. Big deal. That made the game stink four times more than normal.

HARDWARE Coaster

Aptiva L31 (IBM): The only good thing about this problem-prone system was the audio—it proved to be Ineptiva at nearly everything else. Hence, it is our Hardware Coaster of the Year.

ADVENTURE/RPG Coaster

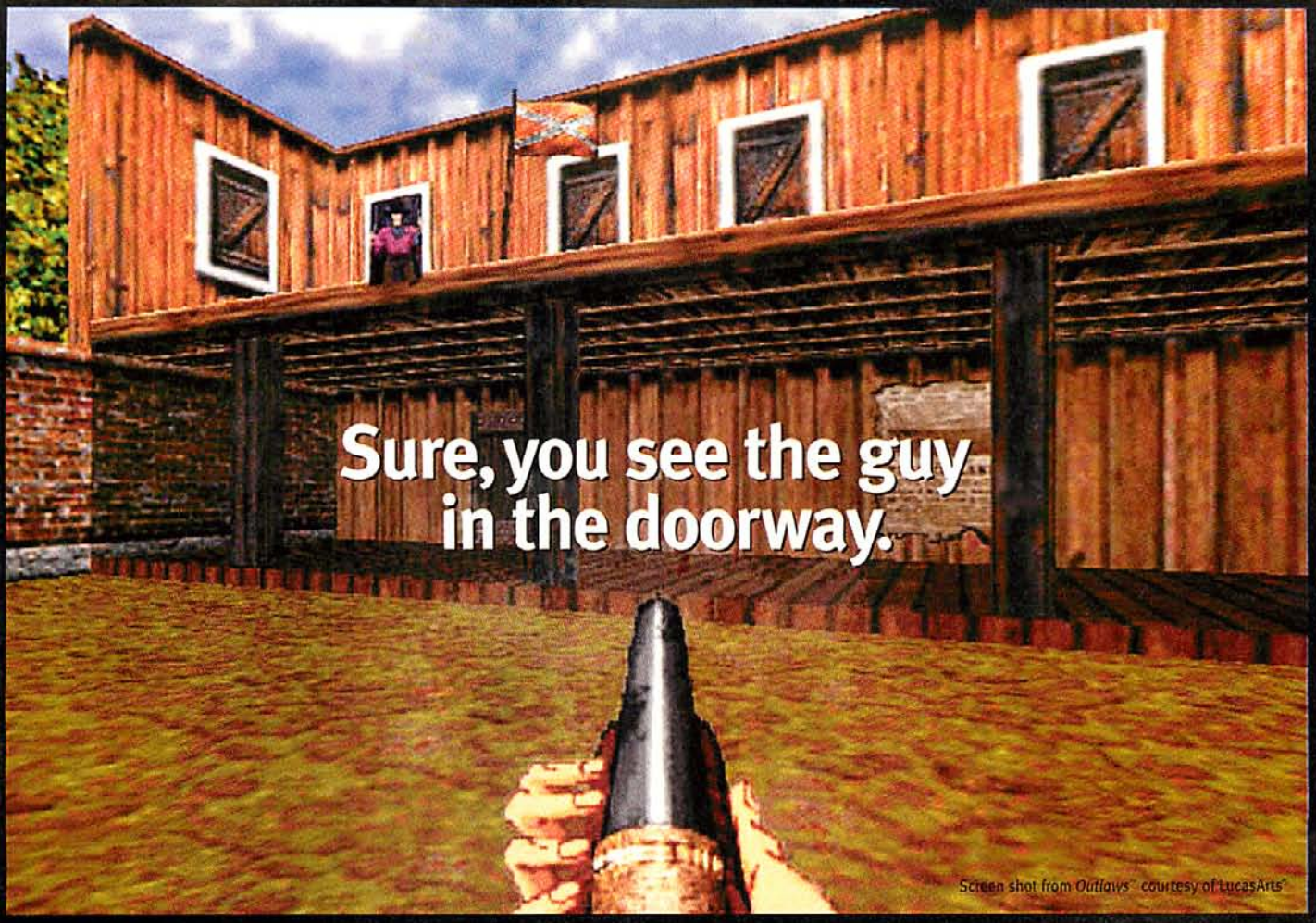
A FORK IN THE TALE (Any River): A game so forking bad it took down the company that made it. FMV still sucks.



STRATEGY Coaster



CONQUEST EARTH (Eidos): Hyped as a revolution in real-time play, this game's bizarre interface and disappointing gameplay made it revolutionarily bad.



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Computer Shopper Top 100 1997

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Microsoft Finally Embraces OpenGL

In an interesting twist to the skirmish between Direct3D and OpenGL, Microsoft and Silicon Graphics Inc. have combined efforts to bring OpenGL to all of Microsoft's Win 32 platforms (Windows 95, Memphis/Windows 98, and Windows NT 4.0 and 5.0).

Details of the deal are somewhat sketchy, with Microsoft taking on the task of certifying OpenGL Installable Client Drivers (ICDs) in their Windows Hardware Quality Lab (WHQL, pronounced "wee-kul"). Microsoft has stated in the past that Direct3D was for consumer applications, while OpenGL was for professional (CAD, workstation) applications. That mantra remains unchanged, and while Microsoft would like everyone to chant the mantra with them, it does mean that if game developers want to use OpenGL in lieu of D3D, there will be enough hardware support out there to make the title run. And because having the OpenGL ICD will now be an integral part of getting Windows 95 certification, OpenGL should begin to proliferate much more rapidly than it has to this point.



While the ABM (Anyone But Microsoft) crowd may be smelling a conspiracy theory (hey, Microsoft is involved), the news for gamers is, by and large, good. Game developers will have an alternative to Direct3D, and because OpenGL is controlled by its Architecture Review Board (ARB), which consists of eight members (Microsoft is one of them), there's less of a perception that Microsoft is trying to bully developers into using Direct3D. But wait, there's more...

At press time, Microsoft and SGI made more waves with an announcement for a new set of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) called Fahrenheit, which will incorporate aspects of both Direct3D and OpenGL. This new set of APIs, to be jointly developed by the two companies, will eventually allow hardware vendors to create one set of drivers that will run Fahrenheit-specific applications, and also run DirectX 3.0, DirectX 5.0 through 7.0, and OpenGL titles.

The announcement comes as SGI is preparing to enter the Intel-based/Windows NT 3D workstation fray, a departure from the company's traditional higher-end market segment. For Microsoft, the deal seemingly kills two stones with one bird: First, the Direct3D/OpenGL belching contest becomes irrelevant (we hope), and the deal positions Microsoft to enter the workstation market with its Windows NT operating system. The first versions of Fahrenheit aren't due until sometime in 1999, so it's still quite a ways out. But taking the optimistic tack, this Microsoft/SGI collaboration will be a win for gamers, as developers will have new avenues for creating killer content. As for the dimmer view, Fahrenheit could turn out to be one serious piece of bloatware, since it has to translate both Direct3D legacy code and OpenGL code into its own format, it could introduce additional API overhead, and it might wind up being more of a hindrance than a help. Because the project's rolled-out products are so far off, we're left to speculate as to whether SGI and Microsoft can really pull this off. —*Dave Salvator*

HARDWARE PIPELINE

Product	E.T.A.
Deschutes (400MHz Pentium II)	Q1 '98
440BX chipset (supports 100 MHz system clock, 4 CPUs)	Q1 '98
Intel i740	Q1 '98
3Dfx Voodoo 2	Q1 '98
S3 ViRGE GX3	Q2 '98

ACRONYM O' THE MONTH

HIPPI:
HIgh Performance Parallel Interface



Real3D Enters the Fray

In the previous edition of 3D Iron Works, Loyd Case gave you the first skinny on Intel's new i740 2D/3D graphics chip. This month, yet another vendor has announced a board using this new chip. But this isn't "just another vendor," it's Real3D, Lockheed-Martin's real-time 3D graphics division—the architect of the i740's 3D graphics core.



Real3D is working on its Starfighter board in two versions: an AGP version that will appear in off-the-shelf systems, and a PCI version that will be sold at retail. Of the two, the PCI part is actually more interesting, because of Real3D's implementation. Using a proprietary AGP-PCI interface, Real3D "fools" the i740 into thinking it's on the AGP bus. It does this by creating a local AGP bus on the board itself. The Starfighter is populated with a 4MB frame buffer, and texture memory ranges from 8MB to 16MB. To the i740, this local-texture memory looks like AGP memory, and can be accessed at AGP's 2x peak bandwidth of 528MB/sec. One concern I have is the fact that the i740's 2D core was developed by Chips & Technologies, which has done graphics chips for laptops, but doesn't have much of a track record in the desktop PC space. Pricing is still being worked out, but we've heard guestimates of around $249 for a board with a 4MB frame buffer and 8MB of texture memory. As soon as we get a Starfighter in-house, we'll put it through its paces and let you know how it fares. Stay tuned.

Turning to the audio front, Shark Multimedia has just begun shipping its Predator 3D audio card, an ISA-based card based on Analog Devices' SoundMAX chipset, which supports Aureal Semiconductor's A3D 3D positional-audio technology, and can accelerate up to six simultaneous audio streams. Analog Devices claims to have solved the problems associated with CPU overhead when transferring data to the ISA bus. The Predator 3D arrived right at press time, so we didn't have time to check this out, but in a brief demo running JEDI KNIGHT (which uses DirectSound 3D) and in some of Aureal's A3D demos, the board sounded pretty good. One downside: Predator 3D only supports DOS games in a DOS box, so you'll want to keep your trusty old SoundBlaster for running in MS-DOS mode. We'll bang on this one some more and tell you what we find. —*Dave Salvator*



LOYD CASE • UNDER THE HOOD

How Fast Is Fast?



The Black Art of Measuring Graphics Performance

Last month, I talked about how to improve the performance of your graphics setup. But what exactly does *improved performance* mean? This month, I'll take a look at benchmarking, both synthetic and real-world. I'll also spend some time exploring 3D WinBench 98, Ziff-Davis' cool new Direct3D benchmarking tool. Finally, I'll try to address a burning question that seems to be the most common email query I get these days: Which graphics card should I get?"

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Benchmarking is a tricky job. Ideally, you want to capture the performance of a piece of hardware in a controlled situation, using a method that's easy to quantify. It sounds simple, but it proves complicated in practice.

There are two types of benchmarks: synthetic benchmarks, which try to stress the system being tested in carefully controlled ways, and applications benchmarks, which try to measure how real-world applications behave on a system. Examples of synthetic benchmarks include

▸▸▸Continued on pg 98

Continued from pg 97

WinBench 98 and 3D WinBench 98. Examples of applications benchmarks include many of the games we use to test 3D performance, such as FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 and QUAKE.

At first glance, you might think that applications benchmarks are the only way to go—but what do you mean when you say *application*? It gets really tricky with 3D graphics. Take the PowerVR chip from NEC, for example. That chip doesn't do particularly well in 3D WinBench. It also fares poorly in some Direct3D games. In other D3D games, it's very solid, and in most games I've seen that directly use the hardware, it runs quite well and the image quality is good. I've seen other cards do quite well in some games and choke on others.

At CG Labs, we use both types of benchmarks and try to gauge performance across a range of different types of games. A card that does pretty well across all the tests will probably get a high score. (I say "probably," because if it's egregiously hard to install or has other flaws, it may not get a high score.) When you're picking a card, though, you may have only one particular type of game in mind. A card that gets a score of 3 out of 5 may be better for your gaming needs because it may do one particular thing really well.

3D WINBENCH 98

This brings me to the latest version of 3D WinBench, the 98 version. First of all, 3D WinBench 98 is much more comprehensive than the 97 version. For one thing, there are more than 40 quality tests (of which 25 are used during the actual 3D WinBench testing). No card currently on the market passes all 25 tests—in that sense, 3D WinBench 98 is forward-looking.

The benchmark looks better, too. First, the 3D WinBench WinMark scenes look more like scenes from a game, and the camera movement is more like game movement. Second, the image-quality tests are laid out in a more useful manner. The image-quality tests offer many more options (41 in all) for checking out rendering. Of course, this means that 3D WinBench 98 takes longer to run, but it's easier to use overall and can really drill down and help us understand how some cards implement—or fail to implement—key Direct3D features.

If you want to order a copy of 3D WinBench 98, go to the Ziff-Davis Benchmark Operation Web site, **www.zdbop.com**. There's an online form you can fill out to order the CD. (You'll probably want to order the CD, since the program is a nearly 40MB download.) ZDBoP charges only a $5 shipping and handling fee, so it's well worth the money.

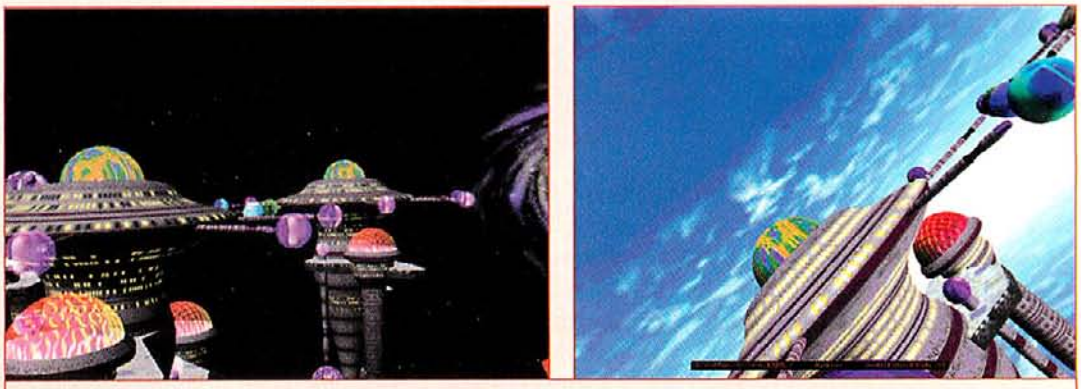
A STICKY QUESTION

The most common question I get via email these days is "Which graphics card should I get?" The second most common question is "Should I get a 2D/3D combination card or add a 3Dfx card?"

I'm always tempted to reply in a flip manner: "Read the reviews." But I understand that it's not a simple issue, especially when it comes down to your hard-earned dollars. So my real answer is simple: It depends.

Okay, so that sounds like a flip answer as well—but it's not. It really depends on your situation, your budget, your gaming needs, and your nongaming computer needs. Let's walk through a couple of examples and show you what I mean.

First, consider a hard-core gamer on a budget. He's scraped and saved to put together a 166MHz or 200MHz Pentium MMX system. The system has a graphics card, maybe even a mediocre 3D accelerator, but he wants to play GL QUAKE or just not have to worry about which 3D accelerated games he *can* play. The right answer, although not the cheapest, is a good 3Dfx card. If our hard-core game player gets a 3Dfx card, such as the Monster3D or Pure3D, he's set. He can



THE FINAL FRONTIER Note how the Stations scene now looks a lot better. Space stations belong in space, after all.

CG TECH TIPS

If you've got a RIVA 128 card, and you want to run JEDI KNIGHT with the best performance, set the texture size to 4 from the default of 1. You can change this in the JEDI KNIGHT setup screen, under display menu. There's a box in the lower right labeled "3D Accelerator Texture Size." Change this from 1 to 4.



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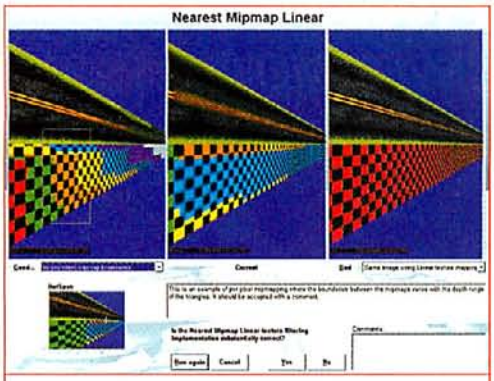
1-800-362-9349

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* Estimated street price. Ultim@te Race is a PowerVR Extreme™ software game. PowerVR and PowerVR Extreme™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of VideoLogic Ltd. (UK). All rights reserved. Used with permission. NEC Electronics Inc. (USA) and Matrox Graphics Inc. (Canada) are authorized distributors of Ultim@te Race. NEC Electronics Inc. is a worldwide distributor and licensee of PowerVR software games developed by Kalisto Entertainment S.A. (France). ©1997 Raven Software Corporation. All rights reserved. id Software, Inc. software code contained within Hexen II™ ©1996 id Software Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed by Raven Software Corporation. Published by id Software, Inc. Distributed by Activision, Inc. under sublicense. Hexen® is a registered trademark and Hexen II™ is a trademark of Raven Software Corporation. The id Software name and the id logo are trademarks of id Software, Inc. Activision® is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc.

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DRILLING DEEPER There's much more detail in 3D WinBench 98, but it's presented in an easier-to-understand format.

play GLIDE (3Dfx-specific) titles, OpenGL games (well, GL QUAKE, anyway), and Direct3D titles.

Now let's look at a more general-purpose user. Here's someone who does a fair amount of graphics work, including some 3D modeling. While a 3Dfx card might be an interesting option for this user, perhaps he's slot-limited somehow. A good card for him might be an ATI xpert@work or even an All-in-Wonder Pro. Another option might be one of the many Permedia 2 cards out now, with as much memory as you can put on it.

Then there's the typical home PC user. Here, spouses and probably kids are using the computer, too. He's not into tweaking the system, but he does want fast performance—or at least, doesn't want to worry about slow performance. A fast combo card, such as one of the RIVA 128 boards from Diamond, STB, ELSA, or others might be a good choice here.

Finally, there's the really hard-core gamer who isn't on a tight budget. (You know, the typical member of CompuServe's FSCOMBAT flight simulator forum.) These folks aren't necessarily rich, but they can indulge their passions occasionally. The right answer here is *both* a fast 2D/3D-combo card and a 3Dfx add-on card.

The bottom line here is that there is no one magic-bullet solution to solve every graphics need for PC gaming. It's true that a 3Dfx board will see you through on many fronts, but it's not the least expensive way to go, it lacks 2D support, and there are other equally able Direct3D performers now available. For people wanting a one-board solution, there are a number of ways to go depending on what things you'd like to be able to do and what your budget is. So before making an investment, consider what kind of gaming you most want to do and what your budget is, and go from there.

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★★★½☆ REVIEW • TV SUPERSCAN 2

Bring Your Games Into TV Land

by Loyd Case



A lot of the newer graphics cards are shipping with TV-out connectors these days, but many still lack this feature. TV-out is a handy feature that adds a little bit of extra cool to your setup.

The TV Superscan 2 is an external scan converter, but unlike many similar devices, the Superscan 2 doesn't require software drivers. In fact, it has enough onboard memory to perform the frame-buffer chores, so it handles the scan conversion fully within the box. You can connect both a TV and your computer monitor to the Superscan 2 if you want simultaneous display. Think about this: Now your gaming can be a spectator sport. There are also connectors for composite video-out and S-video.

The controls are simple and easy to use. One button brings up an on-screen menu that allows you to tweak the horizontal and vertical settings. This little black box is also smart enough to handle relatively high-resolution computer inputs—up to 1024x768 with overscan, and 800x600 with no overscan.

Display quality through the composite output looks okay from a distance, but S-video can look quite good if you're not too close.

The possibilities go beyond just using a TV as a big monitor. Imagine that you're playing online, and you want evidence of your frag totals. Just hook up the Superscan 2's composite output to your VCR—presto, instant gun camera.

So the next time you eye that $1,400, 21-inch monitor, remember that 29-inch "monitor" in the family room. After all, it's a waste to use such a big tube for mere television.

Price: $299 (street)
Vendor: ADS Technologies
(562) 926-1928
www.adstech.com

APPEAL: People wanting a big tube without the cost.

PROS: Easy setup; intuitive control set.

CONS: Expensive; you have to lug your computer to the family room; ungainly wires.

CG LABS RATED ★★★½☆

★★☆☆☆ REVIEW • TURTLE BEACH DAYTONA PCI

Unsound Choice

by Loyd Case



This year is probably the last one in which the aging ISA bus will be a factor in PCs. One of the last bastions of ISA hardware has been sound cards. Windows 95 and DirectSound are beginning to change that, and we're finally starting to see PCI sound cards. The Turtle Beach Daytona PCI is one such example.

The Turtle Beach card uses the S3 Sonic Vibes PCI audio-chip. The chip can handle the new DLS technology (downloadable sample store), which uses your system memory to store custom sounds that can be played back through the onboard wavetable synthesizer. The card comes with a 2MB wavetable that's loaded into main memory. During playback of several MIDI files with the Windows 95 System Monitor running, there is no significant CPU hit.

The quality of the MIDI sounds is an entirely different issue, however. Even with the maximum 2MB setting, the MIDI sounds somewhat tinny, and some of the percussion sounds are simply terrible. Digital audio sounds pretty good, but this is a noisy card. Turn up your speakers when there's no sound being played back, and you could be standing near Niagara Falls.

Setup is pretty easy, but the card did not like the fifth PCI slot in my system (that's often the case for bus-mastering PCI cards). Moving it to another slot fixed that problem. The setup program was confused about the system settings upon reboot, and offered an accurate walkthrough on how to fix the I/O addresses that had been set incorrectly.

Windows 95 game audio sounds pretty good (except for the hiss), and DOS games that can be run from Windows 95 work quite well. However, neither DUKE NUKEM 3D nor DOS QUAKE ran properly from a Windows 95 DOS boot.

Although the low cost makes up somewhat for the deficiencies, it's hard to recommend this card. For best compatibility, the AWE-64 value edition still wins, and it's much quieter to boot. As a PCI sound card, the Turtle Beach card doesn't come close to the more versatile Diamond Monster Sound. Give this one a pass.

Price: $99 (estimated street)
Vendor: Turtle Beach
800-233-9377
www.tbeach.com

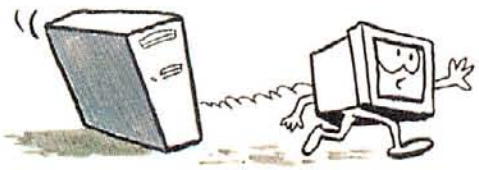
APPEAL: Loyal S3 users looking for a low-cost PCI sound card.

PROS: Uses one of those free PCI slots; fairly easy setup.

CONS: Lots of hiss; poor MIDI sound quality.

CG LABS RATED ★★☆☆☆

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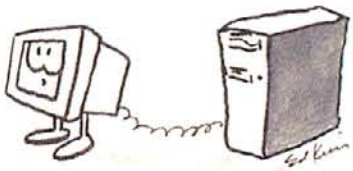
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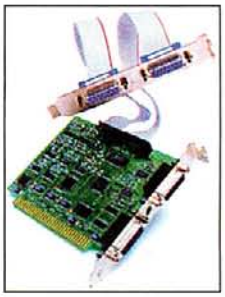
by Loyd Case

I've long lamented the fact that the creaky analog joystick port, developed in the era of the original IBM PC, is a CPU hog. Game ports on most systems today behave in a virtually identical manner to the one you could get for the original IBM PC. Most game ports—including those on ISA-based sound cards—can consume 10 to 15 percent of your CPU cycles because of the polling of the joystick input. On top of that, during the actual polling interval, interrupts are disabled—at least they are in Windows 95—which further increases the latency of your net gaming experience.

Almost everyone has been looking forward to the day that USB controllers will arrive in force. While we were waiting, Pacific Digital Peripherals has sneaked in with its Lightning 4 game card.

The Lightning 4 is a true game geek's delight. It can support up to four full-featured joysticks or eight 2-axis, 2-button joysticks. It even comes with an extra bracket, so you can have four joystick ports. I connected a CH F-16 Combat Stick, Pro Throttle, and Pro Pedals and successfully flew FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 and LONGBOW 2.

More importantly, the Lightning has its own onboard processor to handle joystick polling, resulting in very low CPU utilization—less than 0.2 percent in most cases. The card comes with a DirectInput driver, the connector bracket, and a small demo utility that lets the device see eight joysticks in action (splitter cables are not provided). While the card supports digital devices, such as Logitech's Wingman Extreme Digital, it doesn't support the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro, which requires the extra MIDI pin. If you're using a standard stick, though, you should have no problems. If you're installing it into an existing setup, make sure you disable any existing game ports. The Lightning grabs I/O address 201, and you can't change it.



So if you're looking to eke out that last bit of frame rate, take a look at your game card. Maybe it's time to add a little Lightning to your rig.

APPEAL: Game players looking for the best game card available.

PROS: Low CPU utilization; easy installation; four joystick ports.

CONS: Doesn't work with Microsoft's Force Feedback stick.

CG LABS RATED ★★★★☆

Price: $119.95
Vendor: Pacific Digital Peripherals, Inc.
(805) 581-7023
www.pdpi.net

SEAGATE MEDALIST PRO 9140 • REVIEW ★★★★½

Closing the Gap

by Loyd Case

SCSI devotees (me included) have long maintained that one of the advantages of sticking with SCSI is that the higher performing technology drives are all SCSI, and that IDE drives are those lowly devices that run at a paltry 5,400RPM—or less.

Seagate just changed all that.

The Medalist Pro 9140 is a 9.1GB UltraDMA/33 hard drive that spins at 7,200RPM and has an average access time of less than 9 milliseconds. This is in midrange SCSI territory, and the performance this drive delivers makes other EIDE drives seem like pale imitators. Using WinBench 98's Business Disk WinMark, I got a result of 1,500, something I've previously seen only with fast 7,200RPM SCSI drives on my Pentium II/233 test-bed. Disk drives being what they are, that score won't be much different on slower systems. (We were careful *not* to use the Intel bus-mastering EIDE drivers, which can give spuriously high results).

This new incarnation of the Medalist uses most of the advanced technology you'd expect from modern hard drives, including MR heads (which helps increase the number of bits per inch on the disk—called areal density) and PRML read channels. One of the more interesting features that's unique to this drive is the use of fluid bearings. High-speed hard drives can be quite noisy, but the fluid bearings dampen the noise quite nicely. In addition, Seagate realizes that this drive will be bought and possibly installed by consumers, so they mount a plate (called Seashield) over the electronics to reduce the chance of damage to delicate components.

Are there faster SCSI drives? Yes. Even some 7,200RPM SCSI drives have faster internal transfer rates, and, currently, nothing touches the 10,000RPM drives in terms of rotating storage performance. But after running the Medalist Pro for some time now, it's made my A List for hot products. The drive comes in a 9.1GB and a 6.4GB version. The 9.1GB drive should come in at around $500, while the 6.4GB unit will likely have a street price of around $350. Getting this level of performance at these prices is a steal.



CG CHOICE

APPEAL: Anyone looking for high-performance hard drives at a reasonable price.

PROS: It's a big, fast, quiet hard drive.

CONS: Some systems need new BIOSes to support the 9.1GB size; best performance with UltraDMA/33 controllers.

CG LABS RATED ★★★★½

Price: $500
Vendor: Seagate Technology
408-438-8111
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★★★★ REVIEW • CS COMMANDER 2

Taking Control

by Denny Atkin



I love the feel and amazing programmability of ThrustMaster's FLCS joystick and TQS throttle, but they're a real bear to program. Normally, programming ThrustMaster's joysticks requires you to dive into a text-editing interface that only WordStar aficionados could love, not to mention that you have to deal with function macros and obscure acronyms for various button presses. But using CS COMMANDER 2, you can simply click on the button you want to program (on an on-screen picture of your joystick or throttle), then click on the keys you want that button to send (on an on-screen keyboard). It doesn't get much simpler than this.

Of course, the program also supports and simplifies more complex ThrustMaster programming. You can create macros for various functions, and then move them to a particular switch or button with a simple drag-and-drop operation. For instance, I created a macro that would activate ECM and dump bursts of both chaff and flares, and then mapped it to a single button-push.

If you're going to do more than assign simple keystrokes to buttons, you'll need to dive into CS COMMANDER 2's thorough, illustrated, online help file. The file includes both reference material and tutorials. There's no paper manual, but this is a case in which online help makes more sense. However, it would have been nice to see more information on ThrustMaster's programming language, because although CS COMMANDER simplifies things, taking full advantage of your controllers requires familiarity with the language's rules. The only problem I encountered was a runtime crash when I didn't specify the path for the COMMANDER 2's config files during installation.

The program supports the ThrustMaster WCS, TQS, FLCS, FCS, and F-22 controllers. If you have any of these sitting on your desk but you've been stuck with using the canned program files included with your games, check out the CS COMMANDER 2. It could help you get the most out of your controllers' capabilities.

CG-ROM

Check out the special LONGBOW 2 edition of the CS Commander 2 on this month's CG-ROM.

Price: $29.95
Vendor: Calana Software
Distributor: Flight Sim Central
(800) 477-7467
www.calanasw.com
www.fscentral.com

APPEAL: Anyone looking for a friendlier ThrustMaster programming interface.

PROS: Offers point-and-click programming of simple commands; simplifies even complex macros.

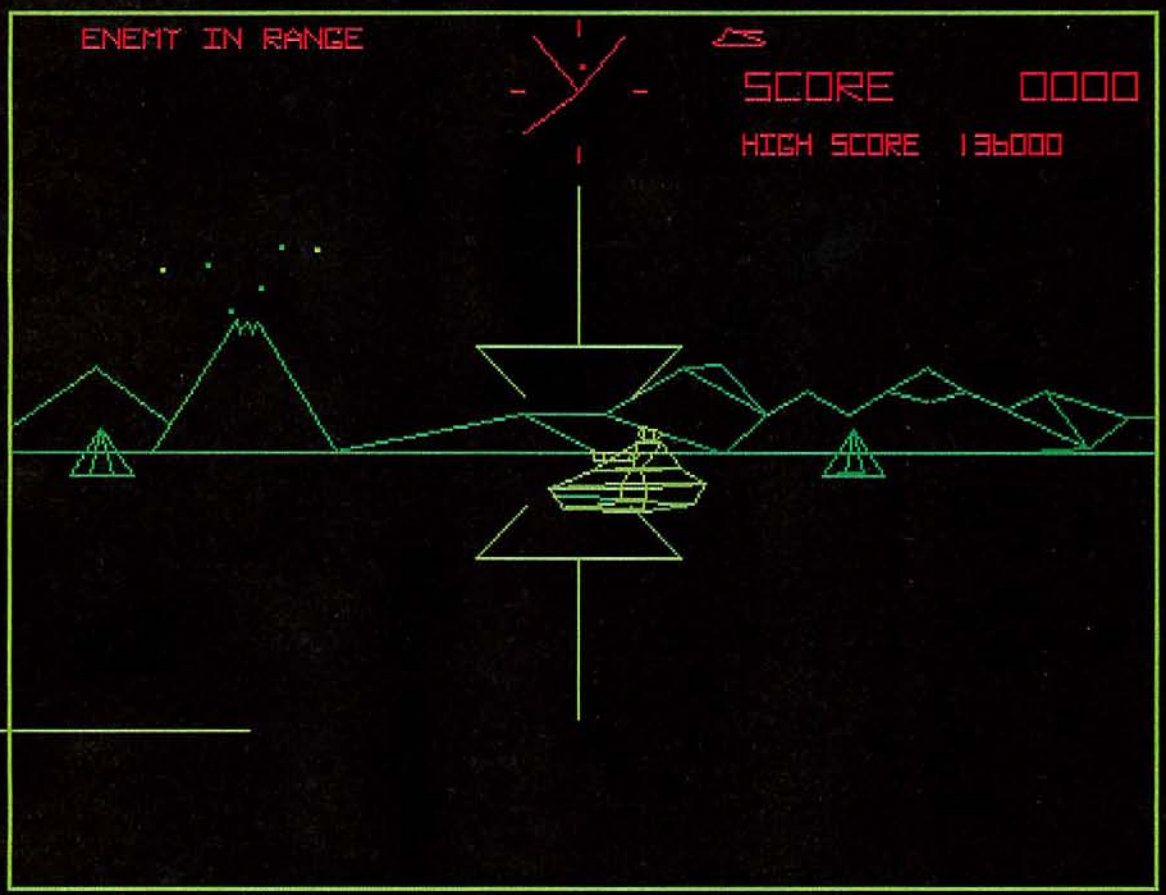
CONS: You'll still need to learn the details of the ThrustMaster command language to take full advantage of your controllers.

CG LABS RATED ★★★★



In 1980,

Battlezone Put You in Command of a Tank.



In 1998,

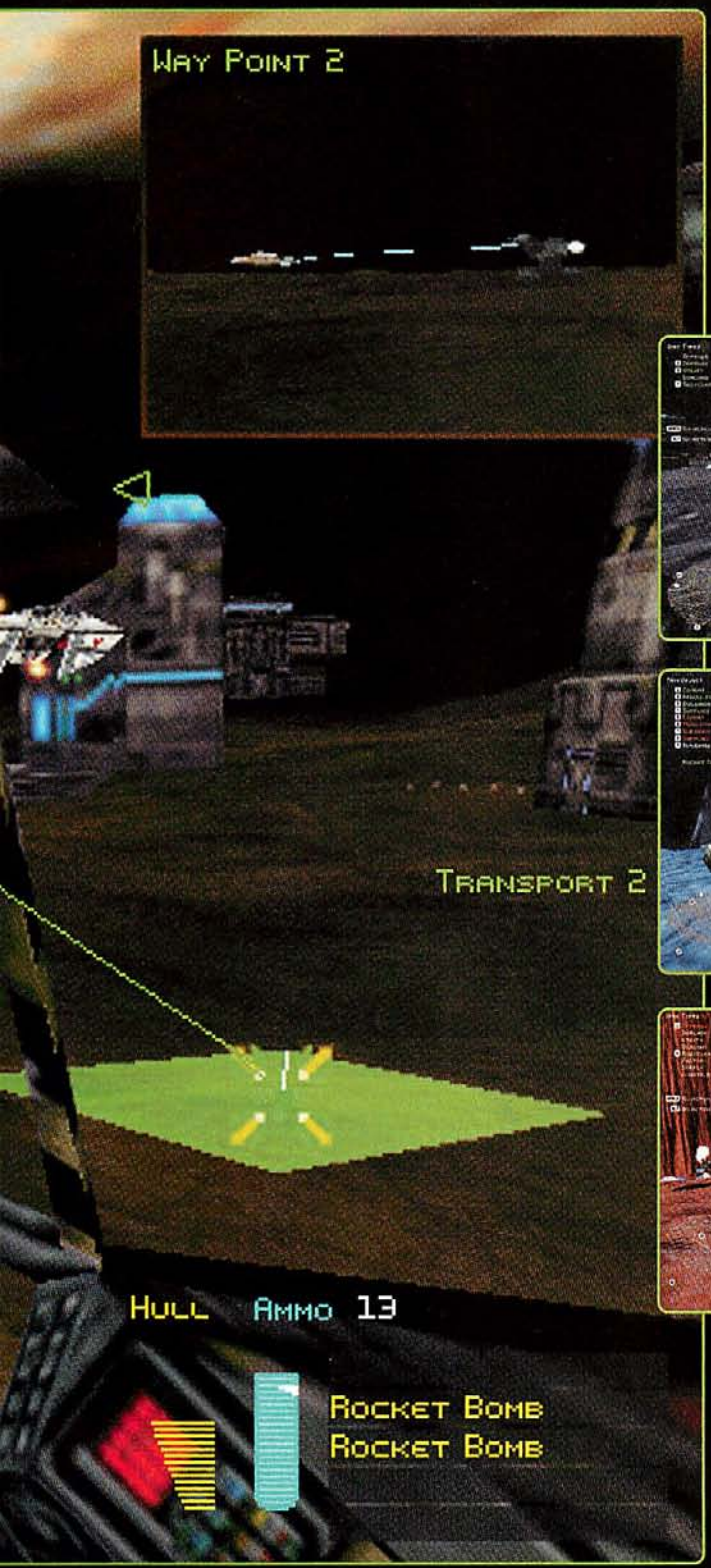
Battlezone Puts You in Command of a War.



Actual Screenshot.

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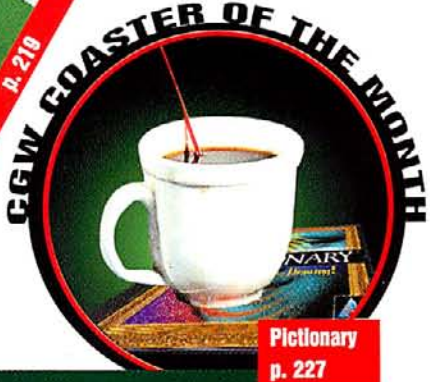
CG Choice Games This Month



Review Quote of the Month

"For those who have been turned off to adventure games by portentous Myst clones or feeble FMV mysteries, Monkey Island is the perfect tonic."

—Jeff Green, reviewing Curse of Monkey Island



HOW DO WE RATE?

We review only finished products, not prerelease versions. The ratings are as follows:

★★★★★ **Outstanding:** The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.

★★★★ **Very Good:** A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. It may have minor problems, but is still worth your money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.

★★★ **Average:** A mixed bag. It can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in several ways. It can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

★★ **Weak:** A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly conceived game design—you should think long and hard before buying it.

★ **Abysmal:** The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived, or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.

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When the evil sorcerer Balkoth threatens the peaceful people of Urak with death and destruction, brave heroes with magical powers must rise up to stop the reign of terror and defeat the forces of tyranny. In Lords of Magic, the successor to the popular Lords of the Realm II, you enter a fantasy world where good and evil fight for primacy against a mystical backdrop of wizards, warriors, spells and storms, giants, gnomes, and Barbarians.



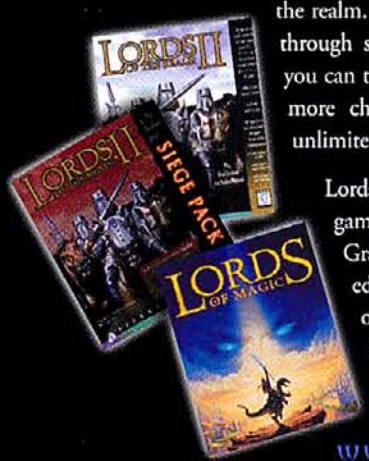
As you explore the land of Urak, you'll battle in dark and mysterious caves, castles and dungeons



3-D terrain editor

comes a mys

Building on the dramatic features that made Lords of the Realm II a breakthrough in strategy gaming, Lords of Magic combines turn-based exploration and resource management with real-time combat. Join forces with others (up to six players can compete on a LAN or over the Internet) or marshal your forces to take on Balkoth and his Barbarian allies alone. You'll command up to Eighty creatures, including elves, vampires, skeletons, and gargoyles, as you defeat evil and save the realm. Wielding the forces of magic through spells and artifacts of power, you can take multiple paths to victory: more choices, more outcomes, and unlimited replayability.



Lords of Magic features a true 3-D game map, with 16 bit SVGA Graphics and a powerful map editor that puts you in control of terrain height, topography, and texture.



www.sierra.com

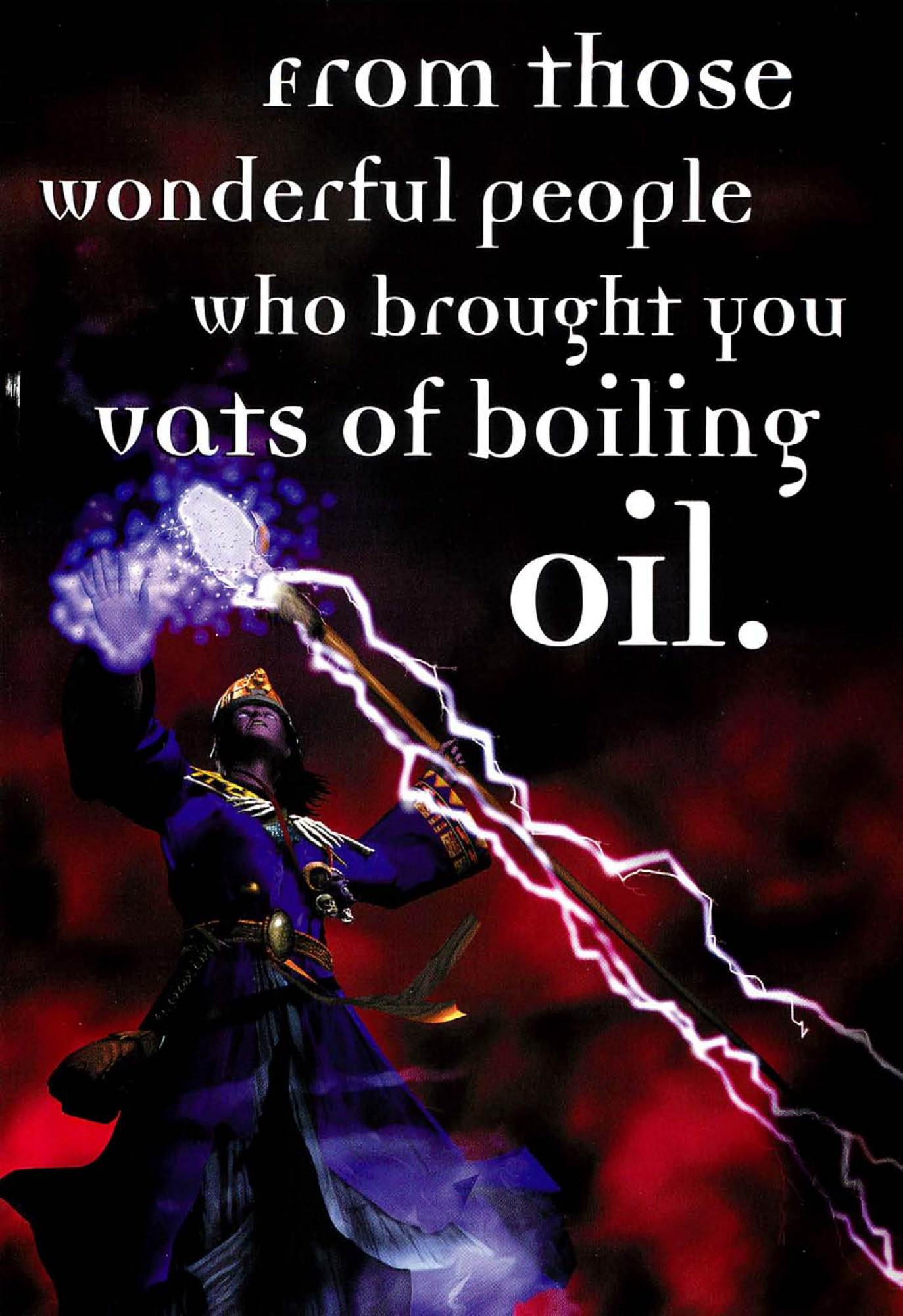
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Impressions

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select one of eight cities to be the center of your empire
In your library wizards will research spells to overpower your enemi
tical world of swords and sorcer
Deep inside your wizard tower sorcerers practice their secret arts to conjure magical creatures and train new acolytes
when you confront the enemy forces of Balkoth, "zoom in" to real time combat


from those
wonderful people
who brought you
vats of boiling
oil.

CGW Review Index

These Are the Games We Have Reviewed in the Last Three Months

Game Name	Issue	Page	Publisher	Rating
ACTION				
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	December	306	Activision	★★½
Chasm: The Rift	February	153	GT Interactive	★★★
Defiance	February	160	Visceral Productions/Avalon Hill	★★½
Hexen II	January	216	Activision	★★★½
Jedi Knight	December	298	LucasArts	★★★★½
Mageslayer	February	153	GT Interactive	★½
Nuclear Strike	February	159	Electronic Arts	★★★★
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee	February	146	GT Interactive	★★★½
Postal	February	150	Ripcord Games	★★½
Pro Pinball: Timeshock!	January	241	Empire Interactive	★★★★★
Resident Evil	January	246	Virgin Interactive	★★½
Shadow Warrior	January	230	GT Interactive	★★½
Shadows of the Empire	January	227	LucasArts	★★★½
Shipwreckers!	February	159	Psygnosis	★★★½
Take No Prisoners	January	233	Red Orb Entertainment	★★
Terracide	December	316	Eidos	★½
Time Warriors	December	325	Malofilm	★★½
Uprising	February	156	3DO	★★★★
Virtua Fighter 2	January	238	Sega Entertainment	★★★★
X-Car	December	338	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★
ADVENTURE/ ROLE-PLAYING				
Byzantine	February	176	Interplay	★★★½
Dark Earth	February	172	MicroProse	★★★½
Dragon Lore II	December	328	Cryo	★★½
Fallout	January	250	Interplay	★★★★½
Meridian 59 Revelation	February	165	3DO	★★★½
Riven	January	254	Red Orb Entertainment	★★★½
Ultima Online	February	162	Electronic Arts	★½
PUZZLE/ CLASSICS				
Boggle	February	230	Hasbro Interactive	★★★½
Galapagos: Mendel's Escape	February	228	Electronic Arts	★★★★
Lose Your Marbles	December	391	SegaSoft	★★★★½
Smart Games Puzzle Challenge 2	January	314	RandomSoft	★★★★★
SIMULATION/ SPACE				
Armored Fist 2	February	204	NovaLogic	★★
Fighters Anthology	December	384	Jane's Combat Sims	★★★½
Flight Simulator 98	December	374	Microsoft	★★★½
Forced Alliance	February	209	Ripcord Games	★★★½
iF-16	January	256	Interactive Magic	★★½
Sabre Ace	February	200	Virgin Interactive	★★½
Star Fleet Academy	December	368	Interplay	★★★½
SPORTS				
ABC's Monday Night Football 98	December	346	ABC Interactive	★★★★½
Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0	December	342	Diamond Mind	★★★½
NBA Action 98	February	195	Sega Entertainment	★★★
NBA Live 98	February	194	EA Sports	★★★★½
NFL Legends 98	December	362	Accolade	★½
NHL 98	February	186	EA Sports	★★★★
NHL Open Ice	February	187	GT Interactive	★★
NHL Powerplay 98	February	182	Virgin Interactive	★★★★
STRATEGY/WARGAMES				
7th Legion	January	285	MicroProse	★★★½
Achtung! Spitfire	December	400	Avalon Hill	★★★★★
Age of Empires	January	270	Microsoft	★★★★½
Battleground 8: Prelude to Waterloo	January	302	TalonSoft	★★★★
Birthright	December	416	Sierra On-Line	★★★
Buccaneer	January	309	Strategic Simulations	★½
Civil War Generals 2	February	226	Sierra On-Line	★★
Close Combat 2: A Bridge Too Far	February	218	Microsoft	★★★★½
Conquest Earth	January	293	Eidos	★★
Dark Reign	December	394	Activision	★★★★
East Front	February	216	TalonSoft	★★★
Imperialism	December	403	Strategic Simulations	★★★★½
Incubation	January	289	Blue Byte Software	★★★½
Man of War	January	299	Virgin Interactive	★★½
Myth: The Fallen Lords	February	212	Bungie	★★★★½
Netstorm	February	224	Activision	★★★½
Outpost 2	December	414	Sierra On-Line	★★★½
Panzer General II	January	261	Strategic Simulations	★★★★★
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain	February	221	THQ	★★½
Sid Meier's Gettysburg	January	274	Electronic Arts	★★★★½
Total Annihilation	January	281	GT Interactive	★★★★½
War Inc.	January	304	Interactive Magic	★★½

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

I Wanna Kill!

CG CHOICE

Improved Single-Player Action and Dazzling Graphics Highlight QUAKE's Triumphant Return

by Dave Salvator

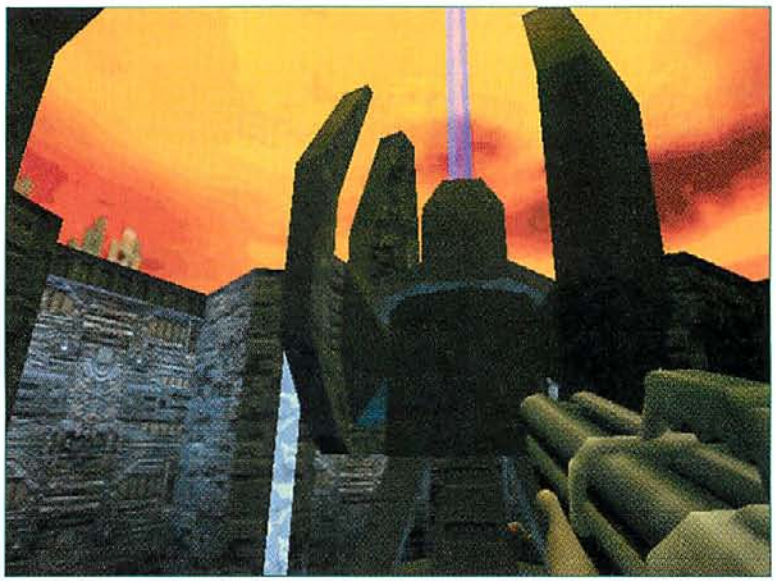
"I wanna kill. I wanna kill!" shouted the iconic character in "Alice's Restaurant." If, in a similar vein, you have homicidal tendencies in your computer gaming experiences, we have one thing to say: "QUAKE II is your boy!" After wowing action gamers with the world's first true 3D shooter, id Software has rocket-jumped the "If it moves, shoot it!" genre to the next level in QII.

PLAYING WITH YOURSELF

One of the primary criticisms of QUAKE was that its single-player gameplay was weak, a by-product of uninspiring level design and borderline brain-dead AI. This time around, the AI is more "special ed" than brain dead, a slight improvement, but not much. The biggest improvements for solo slaggers have come in overall level design, and mission based "units," in which you have actual objectives rather than just finding keys to open doors and exit the level. There's actually a story line in which you're pitted against the Strogg, an alien race hell-bent on the destruction of humanity. Okay, not the most original story line in the world, but fortunately, the missions from unit to unit have a certain continuity and flow. Also, as you battle your way toward the inner sanctum, your missions include retrieving a severed head for a retinal scan, knocking out a reactor, and disabling a communications system.

One thing any first-person game has to do is set a mood to draw you in and keep you wanting more. QII sets the mood early on, and I found that each night I played, by the time I reached a "practical stopping-point," it was 2:30 in the morning—again. QII's audio became much more immersive when I used headphones, and made the overall mood much creepier. QII definitely has the jones factor.

There are several elements from DOOM evident in QII: There are small health units that you can still accumulate beyond 100 health points, as well as armor



TRANSMISSION TROUBLE One of your QII missions is to take out this communications station.



Price: $59
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster–compatible sound card.
3D Support: OpenGL, 3Dfx, PowerVR.
Multiplayer Support: LAN and Internet TCP/IP (2–32 players); no CD required with 225MB install.
Designer: id Software
Publisher: Activision
Santa Monica, CA
(800) 477-3650
www.idsoftware.com



BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE In QII, you can choose from among a variety of skins to wear in multiplayer action.



GET BENT, GET DEAD Like the monsters, you can crouch, too. While handy for hiding, it'll leave you a sitting, or crouching duck in a firefight.

shards (small amounts of armor to bolster whatever armor you have). QII also features the new and improved BFG 10K, very handy for clearing entire rooms. Monsters are more of the cyborg variant — part humanoid, part machine — and have higher polygon counts than QUAKE's ne'er-do-wells, so their movements seem much more realistic. And when they do finally give up the ghost, some, like the guards, have a last dying gesture: They either flail around on the ground before expiring or they sit up to try to fire one last shot before passing on. So, you definitely have an incentive to reduce them to giblets.

Most of the same power-ups are back in QII, except for the Ring of Shadows (invisibility), which has been replaced by the Silencer. All power-ups, underwater breathers, and environmental suits can be stored in your inventory and used when needed. It's very handy indeed to have on-demand quad damage for those especially hairy moments.

Each unit through which you battle consists of three or four interconnected QUAKE-sized levels. One annoyance with the new larger "units" is that whenever you reach a connector between two levels, there's nothing to tell you which level you're about to enter. Having this might seem like something of a crutch, but given the longer load times between levels, it would have been a helpful addition.

The Strogg combatants are a little smarter than their QUAKE ancestors, though they're still not an especially bright lot. In QII, some of the baddies can crouch to duck your shot, though they stay crouched long enough to become catchers of your lead fastball. Two words: Aim lower. The monsters' AI routines are scripted, so they can't react dynamically to what you're doing, but there are some clever effects. For example, some preset events take place at certain Y-junctions: You might come in, go left, start partying with a couple of Stroggs, and suddenly realize that you're also taking fire from behind. The other pranksters were lurking on the other side of the Y-junction and have decided to join the fun. So, while individual AI isn't stellar, enemy placement and clustering can still keep you on your toes.

The three difficulty levels — easy, medium, and hard — scale up the number of foes and the number of hit points needed to down your enemies, while reducing the amount of health scattered throughout the units. QII doesn't have a Nightmare difficulty level, but the Hard setting should keep you sufficiently overwhelmed.

The final showdown is with the Strogg commander, one big-assed boss whose arsenal includes a BFG and twin chain guns. Ouch. Without giving away too much, there's a very cool sequence during the Final Showdown that's reminiscent of *Aliens*. The final level also has a pretty cool secret that I'll leave you to discover.

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

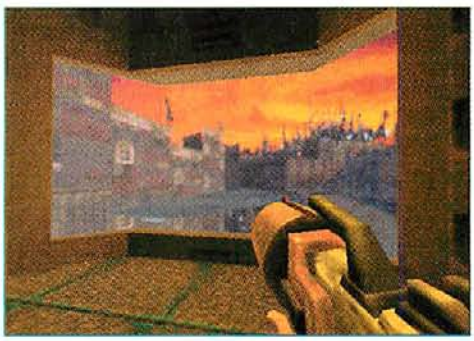
One thing that QUAKE did absolutely right was its multiplayer gameplay. QII, therefore, faces a huge challenge to outdo its predecessor in this arena. The news here is for the most part good, with a few weaknesses. First, the good stuff:

As in single-player action, you can opt to store power-ups or have them instantly activated. Among the Frags-R-Us crowd here at *CGW*, the opinions about power-up hoarding are mixed. Some like it, while others think it unfairly tilts gameplay. Rather than glowing, a player with the quad turns blue, whereas someone with invulnerability turns bright red. Definitely a case in which it's better to give than receive. Another cool addition is that you get a countdown when a power-up is activated so you know when it's about to run out of gas.

Curiously, co-op multiplayer is nowhere to be found in QII. It probably wasn't the preferred way to play QUAKE multiplayer, but it was fun. QII no longer supports LAN multiplayer using the IPX protocol; it now uses only TCP/IP. Thankfully, setting up TCP/IP has become much less painful in Windows 95.

Multiplayer gameplay feels similar to QUAKE's, though your weapon is held to one side, so there's a bit of learning curve to aiming in QII. You can set your weapon to be centered, but it won't be visible. The biggest downer in QII's multiplayer is that there aren't any levels included that are expressly multiplayer levels. All DeathMatch levels are actual single-player levels, and while some make for good DeathMatch levels, they're not quite up to the six

▸▸▸Continued on pg 134



YOUR WINDOW ON THE WORLD In addition to lots of giblets, QII's graphics include spectacular scenery.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Back In Tomb

A Bit Less Tomb-Raiding and Some Minor Polishing Makes for a Decent Sequel

by Thierry Nguyen



WITHIN YOUR GRASP This is the Temple of Xian, where the famed Dagger resides. Don't think your quest ends here though.

Who was it, I wonder, that started the idea that archaeology is a sexy profession. (Okay, I also wonder how Lara Croft can run around Tibet in short-shorts, but that's a different topic.) In all the *Indiana Jones* movies and in TOMB RAIDER, archaeology looks to be a career full of danger, intrigue, and many tombs. In reality, the job usually involves endless, monotonous digging and sifting, but you can continue the fantasy ideal of archaeology via the latest installment of Core Design's TOMB RAIDER series.

DEADLY DAGGER

In the original TOMB RAIDER you searched for the Scion that would unlock the secret of Atlantis and its fate; TOMB RAIDER II has you going after the mystical Dagger of Xian. The game opens with a fancy-looking FMV sequence demonstrating the power of the Dagger, as it turns its owner into a Dragon. You then see it buried beneath the Great Wall of China. That's your setup. Unless you opt for training in Lara's mansion, starting the game will whisk you off to the Great Wall where you then begin your journey through 18 game levels.

MORE GRAPHICS

The gameplay in TOMB RAIDER II is identical to that in its predecessor. There have been no serious overhauls here; most of the changes are minor tweaks, fixes, and additions.

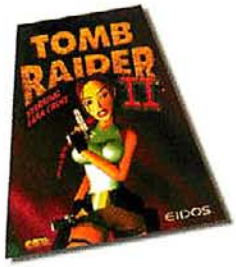
Lara has a few new moves and a few new weapons. She now shows a new style of climbing and has the ability to flip underwater and in the air. The game features a few water threats and some puzzles that require you to use her new moves. Finally, there are a few instances in which Lara gets to pilot vehicles (a speedboat and a skimobile).

As for her weapons, the magnums from the original game are gone. In their place are full-blown automatic pistols. There is also a harpoon, a grenade-launcher, and an M-16. In inventory, the only additions are flares and three Dragon Statues, which signify secrets in each level.

One of the more hyped-about changes in TOMB RAIDER II is Lara's famed ponytail. When I first heard about it, I scoffed. I must admit, though, that it did look pretty cool, as the ponytail reacts to the environment, swaying realistically in the wind or water, or under the force of gravity.

Another hyped graphics change is the dynamic lighting. It's also done well and is best demonstrated by either throwing a flare or firing a grenade down a dark tunnel. Lara has a limited supply of flares, though, so you may need to use your pistols (which still have unlimited ammo) as a substitute flashlight.

To complement the improvements in the graphics, Core Design has enhanced the game's sound. There's more speech this time, as well as better-sounding weapons. The magnum and the Uzi used to share a very flat, dull firing noise, but now game sounds pack a punch.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90 or better, Windows 95, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), 1MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, Windows 95–compatible sound and video cards.
3D Support: Direct3D.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Core Design
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
San Francisco, CA
(800) 617-8737
www.eidosinteractive.com



WELCOME BACK Many of the new levels are outdoors or underwater, but the Tibetan foothills are reminiscent of TOMB RAIDER.

LESS TOMB RAIDING

Although the engine and gameplay are basically the same, the setting has undergone a significant change. There's less emphasis on tombs this time, as you explore levels ranging from the Catacombs of Talion and the Wreck of the *Maria Doria* to Venice and an Offshore Oil Rig.

The level design in this game has improved significantly. Many of the levels are more interesting architecturally, and the traps are a *lot* more devious. This game is definitely tailored for the TOMB RAIDER veteran, not the newbie. Quite a few of the traps are based on the "die and restore" principle, in which you die when you first encounter the trap to see how it works, and then restore a saved game to tackle it seriously. You'll need to save a lot more frequently this time. While these traps were annoying, others simply required a good sense of timing and some quick thinking. A good example is the small gauntlet of razor blades, spikes, and boulders in the first level; consider it a test to see how well you'll do in the rest of the game. Between the levels, you'll sometimes get either a pre-rendered or in-game cut-scene detailing more of the story.

The enemy variety has also widened a bit. The previous game focused more on animals and exotic creatures. Now, we get animals, some exotic beasts, and a lot of humans. TOMB RAIDER was slower paced, as the animals came at you every once in a while; but TOMB II's pace has been quickened with more human opponents populating the levels. The human opponents brandish weapons ranging from simple baseball bats to nasty flamethrowers. The animals look much better now, but the humans look primitive in comparison.

The game is improved, but I still have some issues with it. Core has added better lighting and textures, but there are still horrible clipping problems. Lara's arm often disappears into the wall, and in some rare cases, enemies waltz right through doors. Also, the plot is weak, with virtually no back story. Lara decides to go after the Dagger in the Great Wall...well, just because. At least money was offered as the motivation in the original.

Finally, the biggest issue is a simple case of sequelitis. This is TOMB RAIDER but with more guns and better level design. Some people don't mind this: DOOM II did the same sort of thing, and it's not necessarily bad. But because this is essentially the same game, much of the freshness of the original is lost.

The bottom line is this: If you liked the first TOMB RAIDER, you'll probably like this one. They've made enough changes to make it interesting, but it's no longer breathtaking. If you didn't like the first game, this won't make you change your mind. Newcomers on their first date with Lara should be warned that TOMB II was made for veterans who completed the first game. A third installment is planned, so let's hope that Core pulls some new tricks out of its hat and gives us a better edition next time.



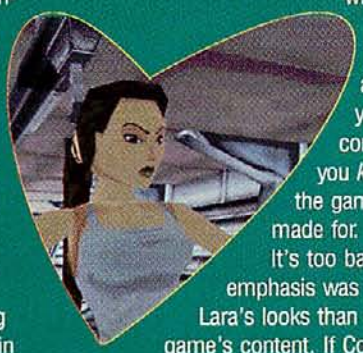
LARA'S RIDE Now Lara gets to pilot speedboats and skimobiles in certain levels.



MASSIVE MACHINERY TOMB RAIDER II adds many new textures for the various new levels, such as this underwater shipwreck.

Lovable Lara

If there is one thing I learned from TOMB RAIDER, it's that marketing can do wonders for a game. Eidos has managed to create *the* most hyped character in the history of gaming. Who else but Lara could be the *only* fictional character in *Time Digital*'s List of Influential People in the Computer Industry?



It's also painfully obvious to whom Eidos was marketing this game. Lara again sports a tight shirt and short-shorts through her adventures, which makes even less sense now that she is traipsing around frigid Tibet. I guess a wetsuit and bomber jacket could be considered an improvement, but she's still got those nearly nonexistent short-shorts. And when she's in a skimpy nightgown and taunts you at the conclusion, you *know* whom the game was made for.

It's too bad more emphasis was placed on Lara's looks than on the game's content. If Core Design had concentrated more on the actual game, TOMB II would've probably been a contender for action game of the year.

APPEAL: Fans of the original, action gamers who like tough puzzles.

PROS: Some beautiful levels; better pacing and puzzles; improved graphics and sounds.

CONS: Weak plot; puzzles may annoy beginners; some of the old engine troubles remain.

CG RATED

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Blue Wonder

CGW CHOICE

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Psygnosis Puts Out a Dazzling Sci-Fi Helicopter Shooter

by Scott A. May

If you've been waiting to buy a 3D-accelerated graphics card, Psygnosis may have come up with a reason you simply can't refuse: G-POLICE. Ported from the original PlayStation version (excellent in its own right), this Win 95 sci-fi shooter emerges as one of the fastest, most visually impressive arcade games ever made. This isn't just empty praise. One look and you'll be a believer.

The game begins with a lengthy FMV sequence to introduce the back story and the intricate plot. In the 21st century, Earth has been rendered a dead planet, thanks to years of environmental neglect, resource plundering, and war. Nations and governments have toppled, and the entire planet is now controlled by a handful of greedy, global corporations. Hungry for new resources, humans have begun to colonize and ravage the worlds beyond Earth.

One such space colony has sprouted on Callisto, one of Jupiter's moons. Because there's no life-sustaining atmosphere on Callisto, the surface consists of a large complex of interconnecting domes. Some domes contain large urban sprawls, complete with massive skyscrapers and busy spaceports. Outlying domes house smaller communities, farms, and mining operations.

To maintain law and order on colonies such as Callisto, Earth's corporate leaders have created a galactic police force called the G-Police. As Jeff Slater, a crusty war veteran and master pilot with an asteroid-sized chip on your shoulder, you join the G-Police to investigate the tragic, unsolved murder of your sister, a former G-Police pilot. Before you solve the murder, though, you have to play cop: tracking smugglers, securing zones, scanning for contraband, and blasting various evildoers. Along the way, you'll uncover clues not only to your sister's death, but also to an ominous conspiracy that reaches directly into the corporations themselves.



CELLULOID HEROES Full-motion video plays a major part in G-POLICE.



CATCH THE WAVE Gamers who have 3D accelerators will be overwhelmed by the stunning graphics in G-POLICE, such as this series of shock waves set off by your deadly bomb.

CRY HAVOC

You begin G-POLICE piloting an assault vehicle called the DASA-Kamov gunship, a HAVOC-style helicopter armed to the teeth. Though futuristic by today's standards, this airship is considered a rickety bucket of bolts by the game's lead character. But therein lies its charm. While other shooters, sci-fi or not, outfit their players with the latest and greatest fighting machines, there's something romantic, à la *Road Warrior*, about placing a bruised and beaten hero behind the stick of a less-than-perfect vehicle. It not only offers a greater challenge, but also conveys the idea that true fighting spirit is measured by inner fortitude, not outward flash.

The gunship uses an arcade flight model, which is both good and bad. Helicopter fanatics may consider it superficial, but then again, the game does not pretend to be a true flight sim. On the other hand, for anyone who has ever struggled to learn true helicopter flight dynamics, it's a welcome simplification. The truth is, this gunship flies and controls more like a hovercraft than a helicopter. Whatever your opinion of the flight model's realism, this is certain: Control is fast, tight, and responsive. Novice pilots can go through several training missions in order to acquaint themselves with the gunship's navigational systems, maneuverability, and ordnance.



Price: $49.99
System Requirements: Pentium 133 (P166 recommended), Windows 95, 16MB RAM (32 MB recommended), 2MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive; supports Direct Sound–compatible sound cards, joysticks, MMX, and AGP technologies.
3D Support: Direct3D, AGP.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Psygnosis
Publisher: Psygnosis
Foster City, CA
(415) 655-8000
www.psygnosis.com



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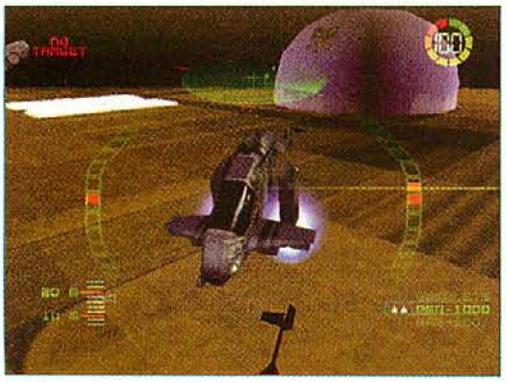
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BARF BAG CITY Multiple camera views, such as this external overhead shot, convey the depth and detail of the game world in G-POLICE.



LETHAL HARVEST Beyond the urban sprawl, G-POLICE missions also unfold in less hectic environs, such as this farmland biosphere.

THE DOGS OF WAR

Gameplay is comprised of some 35 missions, with fascinating FMV sequences interspersed to advance the story line, introduce new characters, and build upon the sinister plot. Missions are strictly linear, which means you must adequately complete one before heading to the next. Most missions have both primary and secondary goals. Failure to complete a goal requires that you start the mission again from scratch. Games can be saved between missions, but not in-flight, which makes some of the later, lengthier sorties frustratingly difficult to finish. On a negative note, the first half of the game has some pretty repetitive missions. Persevere, however; it's well worth it.

The game defaults to first-person view, although multiple camera angles—such as chase, fly-by, and overhead—can be accessed via hotkeys.

There's plenty of heavy weaponry to assist and amuse you throughout the game. Your standard weapon is a nose-mounted 30mm fixed cannon, featuring an extremely high fire rate and an annoying tendency to overheat. Other ordnance includes a variety of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles; bombs; lasers; plasma launchers; and pulse paralyzers.

The new weapons pack a wallop, but my favorites are definitely the starburst dispersion missiles, which launch in bursts of eight, and the 1000Kg bomb, which unleashes a shock wave unlike anything else you've ever seen.

EYE CANDY

Here's the best part. G-POLICE features graphics that are arguably the most elaborate and fantastic to ever grace the computer screen. Although the game doesn't require a 3D-accelerated video card, its beauty can't be totally appreciated without one. Most missions take place in city domes, with myriad skyscrapers, each MIP-mapped with stunningly realistic textures, flashing lights, signs, and billboards. Like scenes from *Blade Runner*, these urban vistas are absolutely furious with activity, both on the ground and in the air.

Other graphic goodies include spectacular explosions, transparencies, light-source shading, and lens flares. If you don't have a beefy machine, you can toggle various graphics effects. Tested on a P233MMX with both 3D Blaster and Monster 3D cards installed, with all settings on high, the frame rate and control were absolutely liquid. The game is even smart enough to recognize multiple 2D/3D cards, allowing you to pick your preference before loading. Finally, this is one of the first games to support the new Pentium II with AGP technology.

Blazing action, resplendent graphics, and an intelligent story line—G-POLICE has it all. If you rate a game's enjoyment by its "wow" factor, put this one at the top of your list.

APPEAL: Advanced-level sci-fi blast masters.

PROS: Knockout 3D-enhanced graphics and sound effects; large variety of missions and locations; genuinely interesting story line.

CONS: Steep system requirements; no multiplayer options; missions eventually become repetitive.

CG RATED

The End of Console Crud

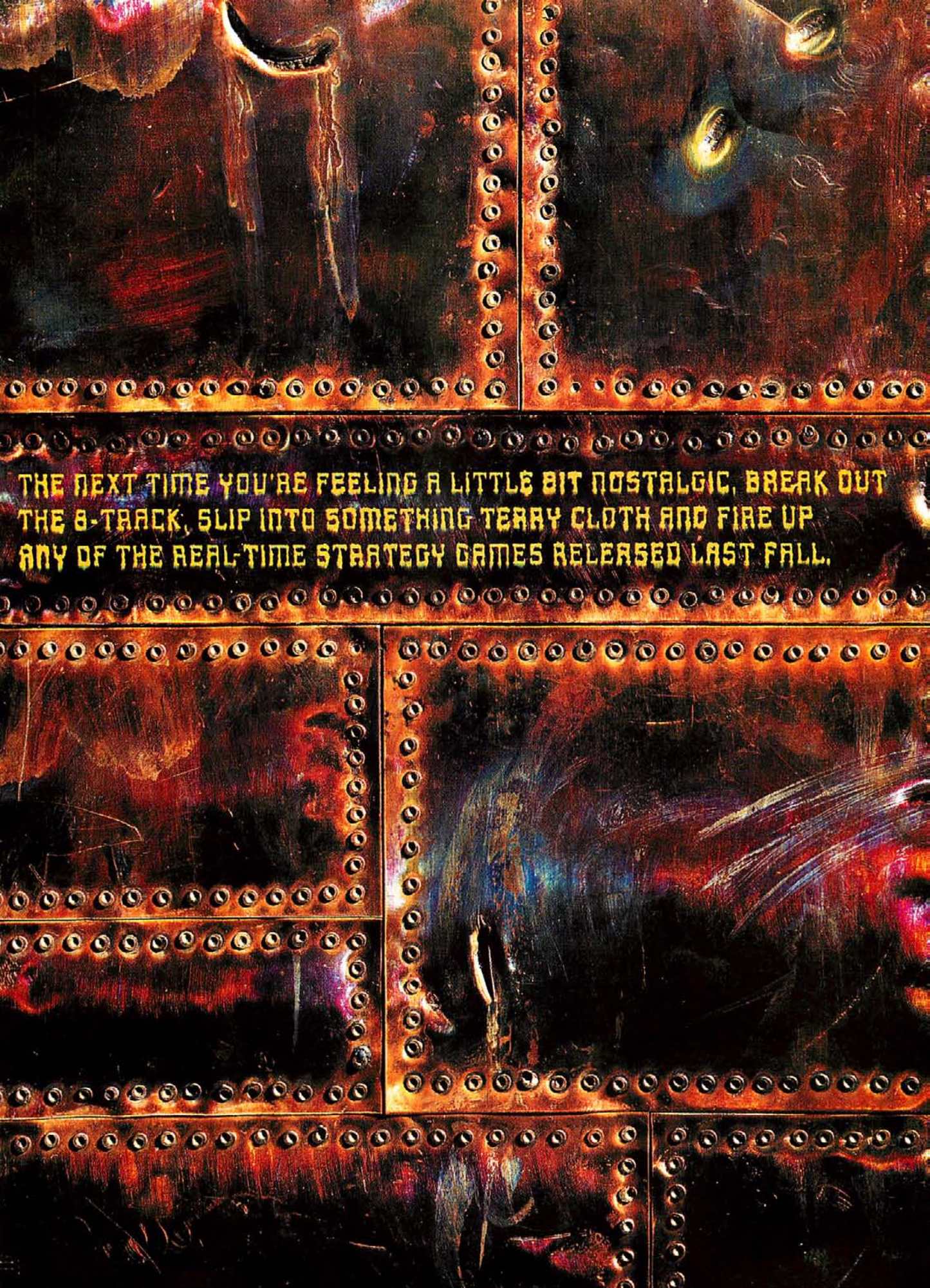
For years, computer players have thumbed their collective noses at games ported from consoles, and for good reason. Typical console ports have been shoddy, designed simply to squeeze more revenue out of popular videogame titles. How else can you explain the likes of MORTAL KOMBAT, TEN PIN ALLEY, or MADDEN FOOTBALL on the PC?

Psygnosis has changed all that with G-POLICE, a PlayStation conversion so good that it does more than merely raise the stakes for other publishers: It sets a whole new standard of excellence. From here on out, PC gamers should expect nothing less than what Psygnosis has painstakingly achieved. Hell, we should demand it.

Much credit goes to second-generation programmers who now fully comprehend the power and potential of 3D accelerators. Let's admit it, PC gamers have always been secretly jealous of their console counterparts. What console games lacked in depth, they more than made up for with a combination of fast action and killer visuals, thanks to dedicated graphic processors. At long last, the tide has turned, thanks to advances in PC hardware that have been long overdue.

But the ultimate kudos should go to the new generation of console-to-PC conversion artists who finally take pride in their work. Programmers like the in-house crew at Psygnosis are beginning to deliver quality products far beyond previous expectations.

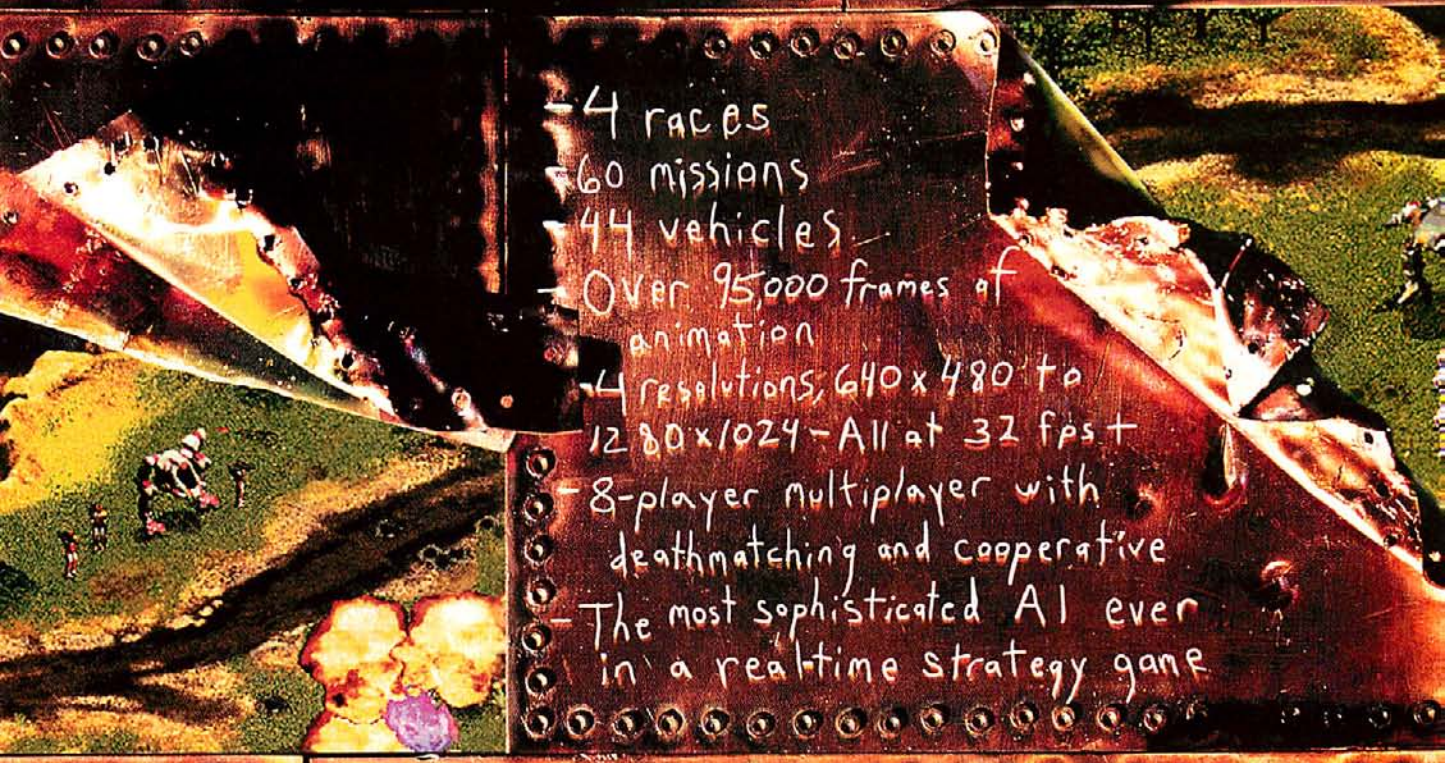
So thanks, Psygnosis, for throwing down the gauntlet. G-POLICE proves how extraordinary console conversions can be.


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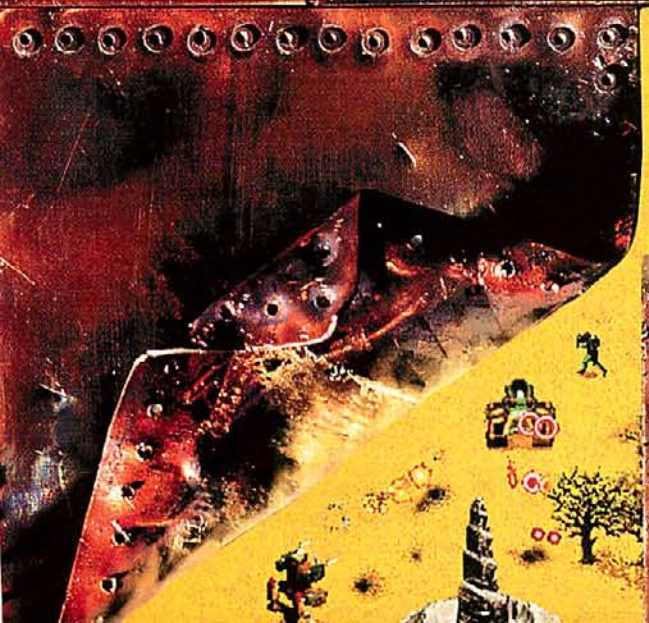
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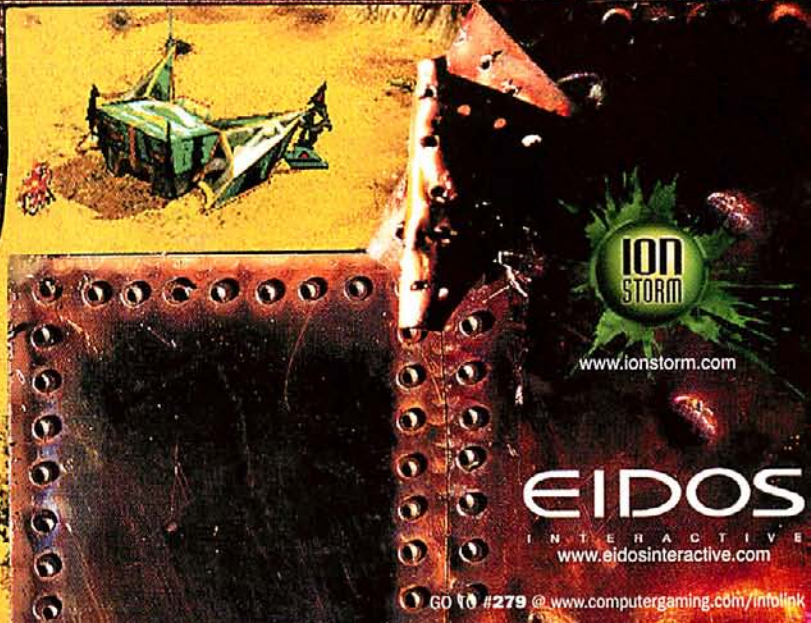
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★★★☆☆ REVIEW • MANX TT

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Moto Chaser

by Kelly Rickards



Sega has once again dipped into its huge library of arcade titles to bring a fast-paced motorcycle racer to the PC world—MANX TT, its 1995 motorcycle racing sim based on England's annual Isle of Man Trophy Race.

Graphically, MANX TT is breathtaking, especially with a 3Dfx board. This is the first Sega PC game that looks better on the PC than in the arcades. Texture detail is vivid, with realistic polygonal models. The frame rate was smooth, never dipping below 24fps on a 3Dfx-enhanced P200MMX. Overall, MANX has a visual flair that's hard to fault.

MANX enjoyed only lukewarm success in the arcades. Part of the problem is that the game only had two tracks. Unfortunately, Sega didn't add any new tracks to this port. Since the game is based on the Isle of Man Trophy Race, there is really only one racing course in the game. Players can race a long and a short version of the main course, and the PC version adds reversed/mirrored versions of each track (so you can race them backwards), but that's it.

The gameplay is fast-paced and fun, but lack of variety really inhibits the overall playing experience. For what amounts to just a two-track game, MANX TT does sport some decent features. There are four different modes of play: arcade (the original two arcade tracks), PC mode (extra mirror tracks), time trial (basic practice), and network (multiplay for eight).

In the end, MANX was a bittersweet game experience. I finally experienced a graphically rich conversion of a high-powered arcade game, but couldn't find enough to keep me happy.



SHORT BUT SWEET The gameplay in MANX TT is fun and easy. Before you know it, though, the game will be over.

Price: $30.00
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM.
3D Support: 3Dfx.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, serial link (2 players), LAN (2–8 players); 1 CD per player.
Publisher: Sega (888) SEGASALES
www.sega.com

APPEAL: Fans of arcade racers and hard-core Sega buffs.

PROS: 3Dfx version offers true arcade-quality graphics; accessible, fun gameplay.

CONS: Too few tracks; very little replayability.

CG RATED ★★★

REVIEW • QUAKE II

Continued from pg 123

DeathMatch levels that shipped with the first QUAKE.

On the upside, QII's DeathMatch players look much better and have a variety of skins, both male and female. In addition, there are three wave gestures you can flash opponents: the salute, the crotch-grab, and the bird.

HARDWARE ACCELERATION VS. SOFTWARE IMAGE QUALITY

QUAKE had 3D accelerator support for Rendition when it shipped, and it was ported to run on OpenGL, running best on 3Dfx. QII has again opted for OpenGL and has specific ports for 3Dfx and PowerVR. If you have a 2D/3D board with an OpenGL driver (like a Permedia 2–based board), QII should run accelerated on your system. When hardware accelerated, the effect is nothing short of stunning. Improved dynamic lighting, colored lighting, and higher polygon counts on the models all contribute to create a much more compelling effect. When the game runs in software, many of the lighting effects aren't present, and QII's image quality does suffer. Despite the system requirements listed on the box, QII doesn't really run well unless you've got more than 32MB of system RAM. There was some lag in weapon switching on 32MB rigs. Some of this latency is built-in and designed to be part of the gameplay, but at times it would actually pause the game while it brought up the animation for the new weapon.



BAD GUY GO BOOM Things, and monsters for that matter, blow up with great fanfare, complete with particles.

IN THE AFTERMATH

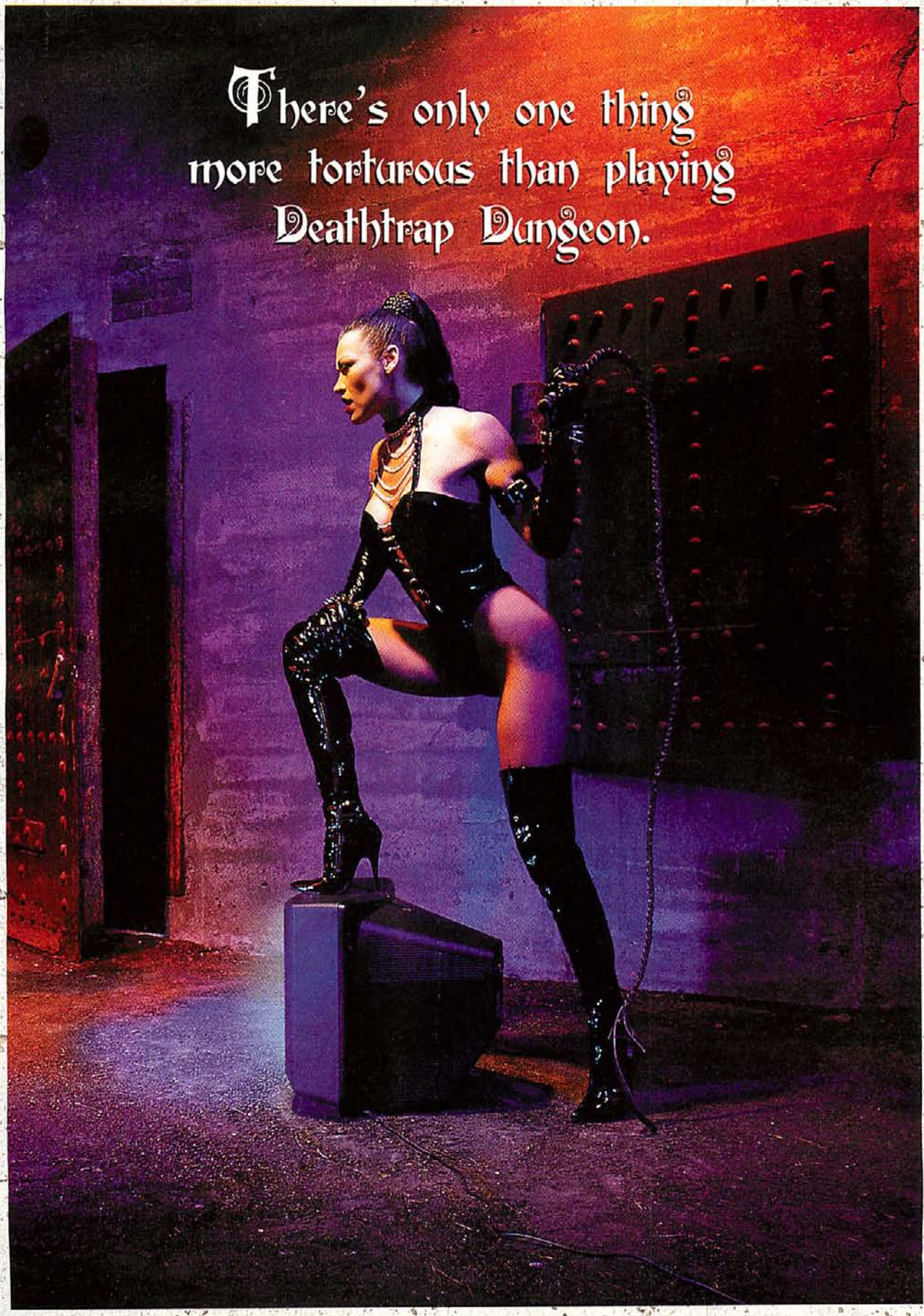
Does QII deliver on the promise of being a solid sequel? Well, in a word, yes. There are a few missing ingredients—co-op multiplayer and specific DeathMatch levels, to name two—but the improved single-player gameplay and stellar lighting effects (when running accelerated), not to mention a plausible back story, do take QII beyond the QUAKE experience. If you're a QUAKE zealot, then QUAKE II is an absolute must-have. If you're wondering what all the fuss is about, pick up a copy and find out.

APPEAL: Action gamers looking to dive head-long into visceral mayhem and, oh yeah, beautiful scenery.

PROS: Improved single-player gameplay; addictive multiplayer action; Immersive, beautiful graphics; colored lighting effects in hardware acceleration.

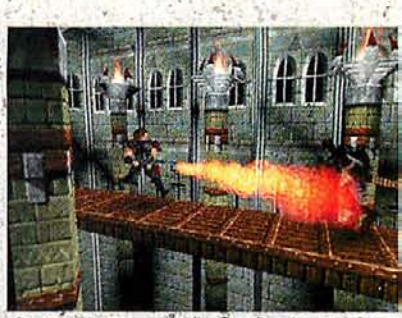
CONS: AI is still pretty dim-witted; some obstacles become tedious; no specific DeathMatch levels; no co-op multiplayer mode (yet).

CG RATED ★★★★


There's only one thing
more torturous than playing
Deathtrap Dungeon.

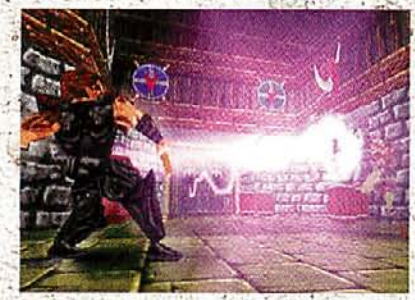


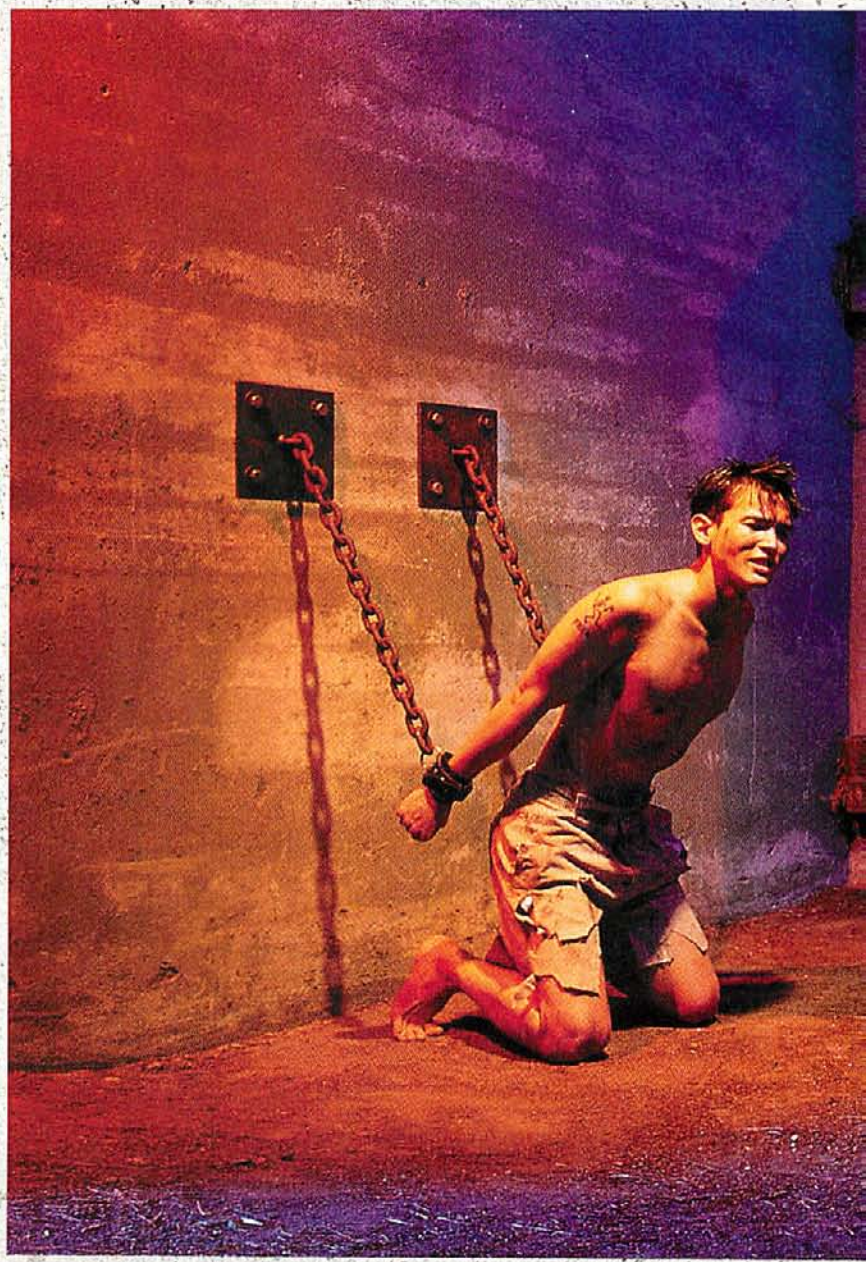












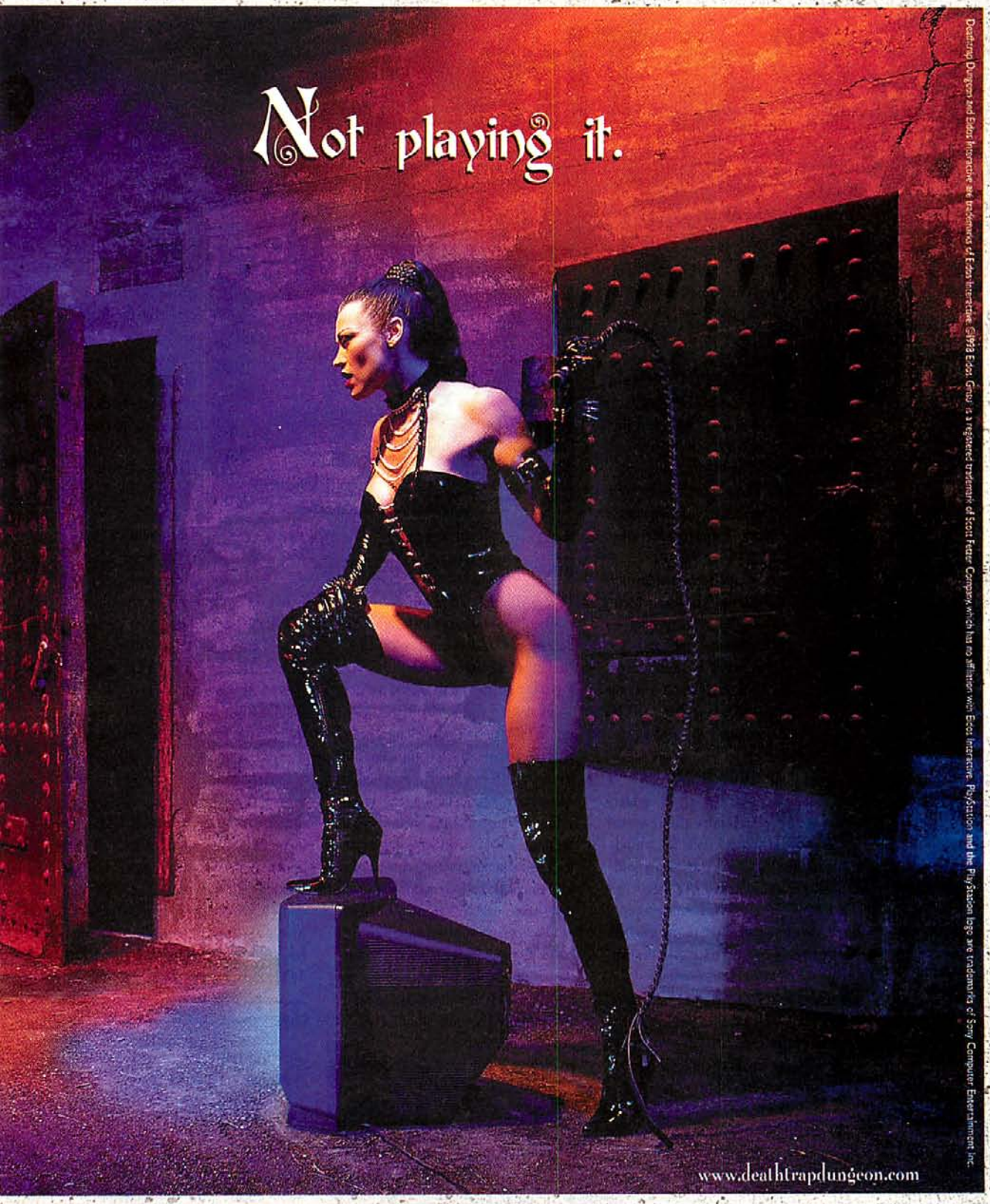
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PlayStation

IAN LIVINGSTONE'S

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Flat Tire

TEST DRIVE 4 Will Test Your Patience and Drive You Nuts

by Gordon Goble

Don't believe everything you read. On the box of Accolade's TEST DRIVE 4, it says in big, bold print, "Test Drive 4 is the clear choice for BEST RACING GAME OF 1997." This leaves me with but a single question: Has the author of this drivel played any other racing games lately?

TD4 is the latest in the long-running TEST DRIVE line, and it continues in the same direction as its immediate predecessor, TEST DRIVE: OFF ROAD. Unfortunately, that direction is downhill. Accolade has dumped the four-wheeling trucks and gone back to the original TEST DRIVE format of exotic cars, high speeds, and pavement. It doesn't help.

Consider TD4 a substandard sibling to EA's NEED FOR SPEED II, from TD4's copycat introduction right on through.

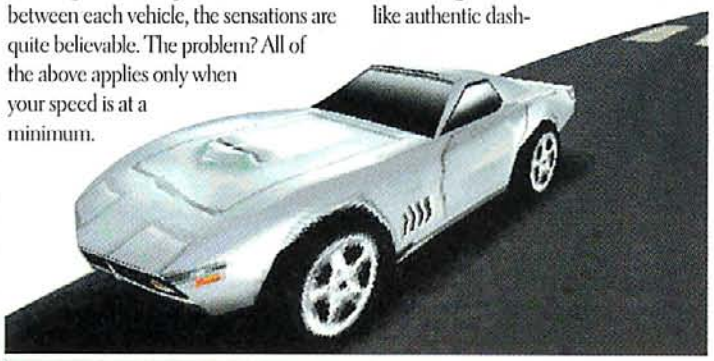


Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 220MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports all major sound cards.
3D Support: 3Dfx.
Multiplayer Support: Serial, modem (2 players, 1 CD per player); LAN (2–8 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: Pitbull Syndicate
Publisher: Accolade, Inc.
San Jose, CA
800-245-7744
www.accolade.com

FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS

The game does offer 6 twisting highway and backroad courses from around the globe, as well as 10 vehicles, including "exotics" like the Dodge Viper, and "muscle cars" such as a '69 Chevy Camaro. So far so good.

In stark contrast to the lameness that surrounds the rest of the game, the driving physics model is surprisingly convincing. From general acceleration to handling and braking to the differences between each vehicle, the sensations are quite believable. The problem? All of the above applies only when your speed is at a minimum.



STINGRAY TEST DRIVE 4 does offer some very cool cars, including Corvettes.



BUMP AND RUN Although the tracks look nice, the erratic gameplay at high speeds is too frustrating.

THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Once you *really* start moving, TD4 becomes far more arcadelike than any "test drive" should be. If you ever played POLE POSITION, you've got the picture.

Subtlety? Forget it. Crank your joystick hard to the left, crank it hard to the right, and repeat. You'll bounce around some and, if you're lucky, may go a full half-minute without blasting into one of your unintelligent peers, oncoming traffic, or the annoying invisible barrier protecting the noninteractive scenery. At least Accolade had the good sense to build in some interesting aerobatics.

Graphics, meanwhile, are a mixed bag, with more bad than good. On the upside, the racing environments are realistically rendered, with varied, remarkable settings. There are nice touches like authentic dashboards, semitransparent smoke, and airplanes that fly overhead. On the downside, the scenery is cursed with tons of pop-through—you'll see some of the outside world from inside a tunnel, and sometimes you'll even drive *through* cars.

The frame rate suffers mightily if you don't have a 3Dfx card, unless you play in low-res mode or a half-size window.

Off the track, TD4 is a cumbersome mess with no mouse support whatsoever. It also forces you to reselect options every time you load the game. To make matters worse, you'll have to choose a steering wheel just so the game recognizes the buttons on your joystick.

After all this, is it any surprise that a season cannot be saved? Or that the race distance and entrants are fixed? Or that there are no car customization options? Or that, even with more than 200MB of installed files, CD access is everywhere, and you have to endure several screens of legal documentation every time you begin the game? I thought not. At least TD4 comes with an uninstall feature.

APPEAL: Fans of bang-bang arcade racing with a dynamic driving model.

PROS: Circuits are challenging, thoughtful, and realistic; cars exhibit individual characteristics.

CONS: Slew of interface, control, and execution problems; graphics are bad on non-3Dfx machines; AI drivers that are way too fast and stupid; driving physics are nonexistent at high speeds.

CG RATED

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★★★★☆ REVIEW • 3D ULTRA PINBALL: LOST CONTINENT





Pinball Lizard

by Shane Mooney

There finally seems to be a trend among developers to put more story into their action games. Sierra evidently decided that even a pinball game could use a good plot, and believe it or not, it works.

3D ULTRA PINBALL: LOST CONTINENT's opening animation shows a small plane crash-landing on a Lost World brimming with thunder lizards. It's up to you to guide the plane's three passengers through the perils of the Lost Continent…by playing pinball.

The 16 tables found throughout the island are multimedia extravaganzas bursting with glorious sound effects, impressive graphics, and surprisingly entertaining gameplay. On one table, you'll use a pinball to take down a carnivorous dinosaur, then navigate that same ball into a strategically placed cave to advance further through the steaming jungle. As you progress, more of the story (as well as additional supporting characters) is revealed. While most pinball games motivate you solely to beat the current high score, this one actually adds an adventure element to the mix.

But, LOST CONTINENT is not without flaws. This game is going to tap your hardware pretty heavily. Even on a Pentium II/266, the ball would sometimes freeze momentarily. And, at times, the goal of each table was just too obscure. Plus, there's no printed manual, only measly online documentation.

But all these minor annoyances are easily countered by the realistic pinball physics, immersive environments, and plot-driven play. CG

Price: $44.95
System Requirements: 486/DX66, Windows 95, 8MB RAM.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Hotseat (2–4 players).
Publisher: Sierra On-Line (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

APPEAL: Pinball fans looking for a solid shot in the arm for their favorite gaming genre.

PROS: Realistic pinball "feel," superb multimedia elements.

CONS: A bit too easy, some table goals are obscure, pinball purists will decry the break from tradition.

CG RATED



Extraterrestrial Ennui

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

SouthPeak Can't Cover Up MEN IN BLACK's Basic Flaws

by Steve Poole



PUZZLE ME THIS One of the game's few bright points is this challenging puzzle in the Amazon.

Glancing over the games based on movies released in the past few years, you might wonder why any game publisher even pursues the concept anymore. STAR TREK: GENERATIONS, THE LAWNMOWER MAN, BLOWN AWAY, JOHNNY MNEMONIC, CONGO—all these and others served only to prove there's a lot more to making a great game than acquiring a hot movie license. In fact, Bethesda's SKYNET and LucasArts' X-WING and DARK FORCES games were about the only movie-inspired offerings that delivered high-quality play.

ANOTHER MOVIE, ANOTHER GAME

Still, the appeal of leveraging box-office success to boost PC game sales is strong, especially when the movie is last summer's smash hit *Men in Black*. On the face of it, *MIB* seems like a pretty good choice if you're going to make a movie-based game—its bizarre aliens, high-tech weapons, and tongue-in-cheek plot are a nice springboard for an action-adventure game. Unfortunately, MIB: THE GAME suffers from a double whammy: Serious gamers will be dissatisfied with the lack of depth, and casual gamers lured by the movie tie-in will be left cold by the game's average graphics and lethargic voice-acting.

The engine takes its cue from games like ALONE IN THE DARK and BIOFORGE. From a third-person perspective, you control Agents J, K, or L (the Jones, Smith, and Fiorentino characters from the flick) as they investigate mysteries in the Arctic, the Amazon, and the fictitious Frales Island. Complementing your standard MIB pistol are exotically named weapons, such as the "Series 4 De-Atomizer" and the "Pulsar Arm Cannon." In some cases, though, you'll have to square off barehanded against evil aliens and humans.

MIB does add a few traditional adventure-game elements to its run-and-gun gameplay. Most puzzles are straightforward—use an inventory item on an object in the game world—but a couple of missions require you to solve some slightly tricky logic puzzles, too.

MUCH LESS THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

MIB has the core components of a good game, but for various reasons they simply don't add up to very much fun. Remember those fancy weapons? Well, you can carry only one on each mission. Not that it matters much, since each weapon looks drab and packs a nearly identical punch. Hand-to-hand combat can be needlessly difficult because of perspective problems, but then again, once you master the keys, outfighting your enemies becomes a breeze.

MIB has numerous other shortcomings—nonconfigurable keyboard commands, no gamepad support, strained attempts to duplicate the film's humor, weary voice-acting, too few alien types, and a kludgy interface for exploration. Look past those problems and you'll find perhaps the biggest drawback of all: It's way too short. Set aside one or two sticking points, and you're looking at somewhere between one and three hours per mission for intermediate players.

Duplicating the excitement and fun of a movie such as *Men in Black* in a computer game is a tough row to hoe, but that doesn't change the fact that MIB: THE GAME is, at best, merely average. Given what gamers have to choose from, that's just not good enough.

APPEAL: Gamers who are looking for a watered-down version of the movie with average action and puzzle-solving.

PROS: A decent mix of action and puzzle-solving.

CONS: Too few and undifferentiated weapons; uninspired voice-acting; drab aliens; cumbersome interface; too little and too shallow gameplay.

CG RATED ★★☆☆☆



Price: $39.99
System Requirements: Pentium 100, Windows 95, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), 10MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, 2MB video card, SoundBlaster 16-compatible sound card.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Gigawatt Studios
Publisher: SouthPeak Interactive
Cary, NC
(919) 677-4499
www.southpeak.com

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

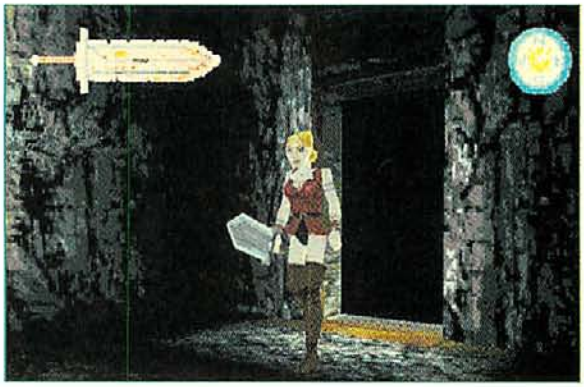
Excali-bore

Sirtech's New 3D Action-Adventure Game Is Anything But Magical

by Mark Clarkson

In 2555, the megalomaniac Delavar decides the one thing he needs to cement his plans for world conquest is the fabled sword Excalibur. Delavar invents a time machine and sends a few of his plug-uglies back to Camelot to snatch the blade.

In response, Merlin the Magician invents a time spell of his own to jump into the future and retrieve the stolen blade. Now, he just needs to get a champion to single-handedly fight legions of evil future baddies, evade myriad traps, and wrest Excalibur from Delavar's villainous grasp. Merlin chooses his young niece, Beth, for this heroic task.



NICE SWORD Merlin's niece Beth, sans pants, arrives in the year 2555 to retrieve Excalibur. You must guide her from sometimes awkward points of view.

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

The Earth of Sirtech's new action-adventure, EXCALIBUR 2555 A.D. (E2555), is a postapocalyptic hellhole. Everyone lives underground in cramped complexes, the upper levels of which are populated by filthy peasants, skeletons, thugs, and wizards...just like medieval England.

You fight your way through the levels using one of two awkward, third-person viewpoints. The game boasts 600 locations, but many are empty hallways. There's little sense of continuity since you cannot see from one room into the next; open doorways reveal only blackness. Worse still, every time you leave a room, there's a pause while the next room loads from the CD.

A VOODOO HEX

E2555 promised great graphics and amazing lighting effects, but I didn't see them. 3Dfx mode didn't work on my Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo Rush card. (A promised patch should be available by the time you read this.)

The documented Direct3D mode was missing entirely. The 8-bit software emulation mode did work, but the results were so ugly that they made me long for the days of Infocom's wonderful text games. The backgrounds are warped and pixelated, the people look hideous, and the special lighting effects are agonizingly slow, even on a P2-266.

If the power-ups hadn't flashed, I would never have found them against the splotchy backgrounds. Secret doors, crucial to solving the game, were sometimes totally indistinguishable from the rest of the wall.

In true cliché adventure form, you're always running around on errands to get this item to trade for this other item, which in turn needs to be traded for yet another item. In one level, you need a key mold. You get it by trading a bottle of whiskey for it, but to get the whiskey, you need to trade a locket. For the locket, you need to kill a robber, which you can do only after trading medicine for a key to unlock the room where the robber waits. To get the medicine, you need to offer a certain paper in trade, which you get after shattering a block with a spell. That spell you can get only by grabbing the spell components from a room. To get to that room, you need to throw several switches guarded by a gauntlet of sparking electrical cables. Why couldn't I just *buy* the key mold?

Still, it's not all bartering and switch throwing. There's a little fighting as well. Unfortunately—and surprisingly—the fighting is the most tedious part of all.

E2555's controls are extremely awkward, and there is no save game. Instead, the game automatically remembers the highest level you've completed. But if you die at the end of a level, you have no choice but to play it over. My advice? Save yourself the trouble and find a good game to play.



ERRAND GIRL Everyone in the world of EXCALIBUR 2555 A.D. wants something from you.



Price: $39.95
System Requirements: Pentium 100, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA video card; supports Sound Blaster–compatible sound cards.
3D Support: 3Dfx, Direct3D.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Telstar Electronic Studios
Publisher: Sirtech
Ogdensburg, NY
(800) 447-1230
www.sir-tech.com

APPEAL: Gamers who are gluttons for punishment.

PROS: Full CD speech.

CONS: Ugly graphics; uninteresting locations; poor user interface; boring and repetitive gameplay.

CG RATED ★

----TRANSCRIPT MESSAGE RECEIVED GSMT 16:42 '47 AGROCOLONY RED SECTOR PRIME 4-----

Miller-----Did
you hear that?

ORTEGA-----Yeah...
there's something back there...

Miller-----Ortega...

ORTEGA!

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MYTHIC KESMAI STUDIOS FOX INTERACTIVE

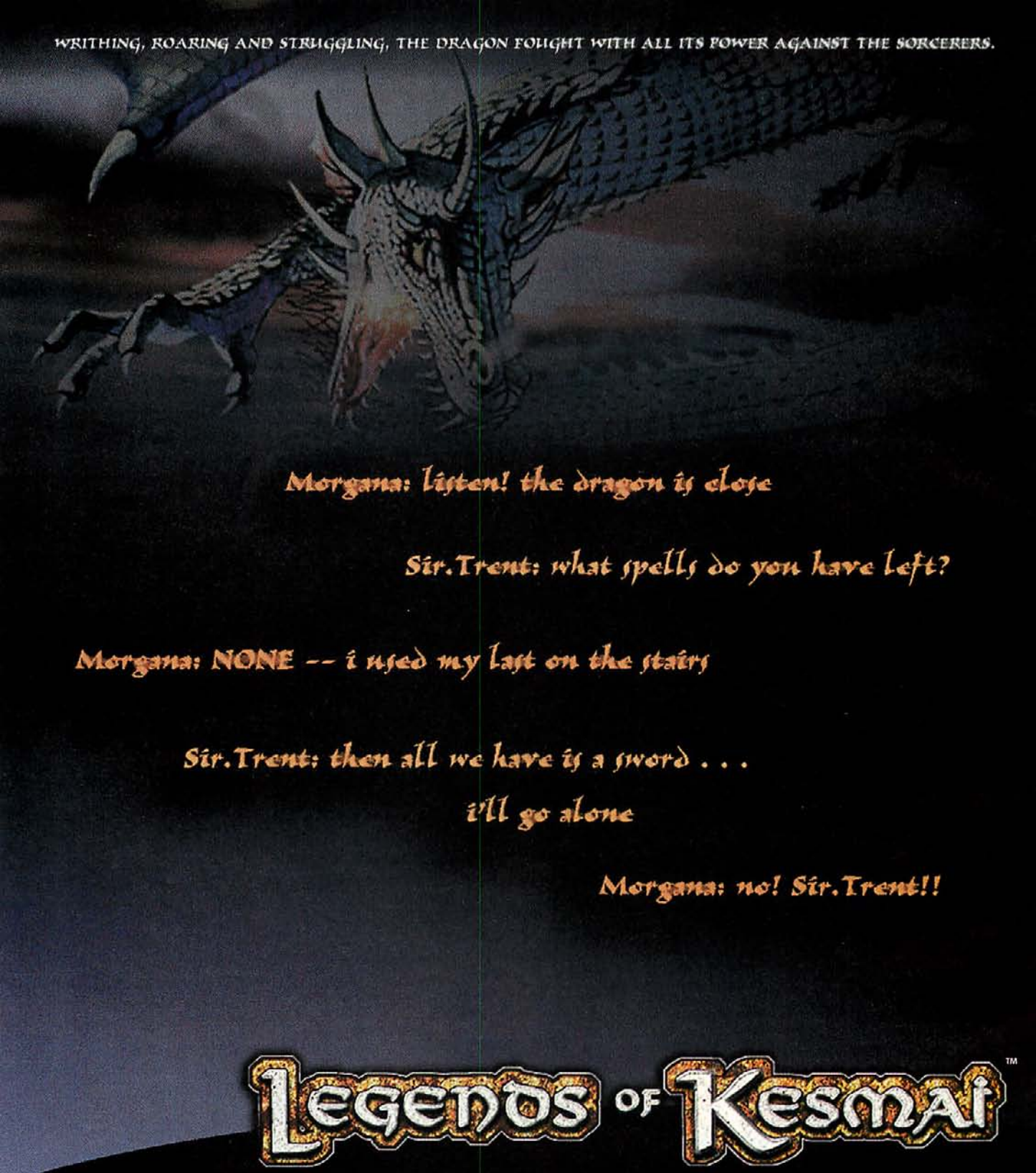


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KESMAI STUDIOS

Just Cruising

by Gordon Goble



DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Anyone who fancies himself a PC racer knows the NEED FOR SPEED formula. Take some truly exotic production and prototype automobiles, place them on several imaginative fantasy tracks, and race to the finish. The graphics are strong, the courses are varied and savagely challenging, and the car model is a lovely mixture of arcade fun and simulation precision.

But that's only part of the story. NEED FOR SPEED is packed with extra goodies—immersive and flavorful stuff that EA didn't have to include, but did. There are visual effects (rear-view mirrors, authentic dashboards, multiple viewing options, end-over-end collisions), audio enhancements (tire squeal, suspension crunch), and a wealth of options (single race, tournament or knockout round; single- and multiplayer).

NEED FOR SPEED II SE keeps up the good work, and the bad. The AI drivers don't race; they shadow. Crash a couple times, and the drivers will slow down to keep pace with you. Set a record pace, and the rest of the pack will suddenly surge to right behind your tail. Drivers would sooner smack into you than avoid you, and scenery is often guarded by an invisible "force field" that sometimes juts absurdly into the roadway.

What SE does add, though, are four new cars (including some '50s muscle-cars), one new track (albeit a good one, along the Mexican coast), and 3Dfx support that beautifies an already pretty game.

If you own NFS II, don't bother dropping valuable coinage on the mild upgrades of SE when number III is invariably around the corner. If, on the other hand, you've never experienced NEED FOR SPEED, get enlightened.



ROAD HOG The game cam captures a Bomber BFS muscling its way past a Mustang Mach III.

APPEAL: Any PC racer who didn't buy NEED FOR SPEED II.

PROS: Arguably the best action racing game; new track, new cars, and 3Dfx support make the game better.

CONS: Only minor enhancements; same NFSII problems, such as force-field guarded scenery and dubious AI driver abilities.

CG RATED

Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, Windows 95
3D Support: 3Dfx.
Multiplayer Support: Null modem, modem (2 players), IPX LAN (2-8 players); 1 CD per player.
Publisher: Electronic Arts (800) 245-4525
www.ea.com

Net Loss

by Robert Coffey



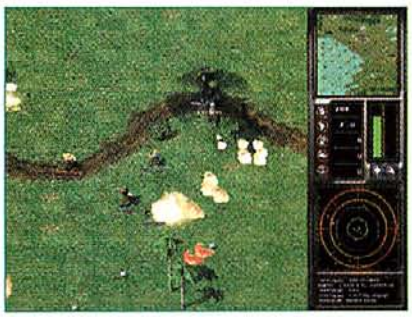
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Some people have never met a bandwagon they couldn't jump on. For example, someone apparently told Headland that people like games that pit them against other humans. The odious result is NETWAR. God forbid that these guys ever hear about MYST.

NETWAR serves up a heavy dose of hackneyed arcade action, in which gamers maneuver one of four virtually identical characters across various killing fields. Power-ups, including 10 different vehicles, help you take out other players. There are three different modes of play: team play; multi-round deathmatches; and crowded, anarchic free-for-alls. It's all pretty tepid stuff.

Lame gameplay is bad enough, but NETWAR has other problems. Characters may suddenly lose the ability to shoot when running diagonally, and the game is crash-prone as well. Trying to join free-for-alls may dump you all by yourself onto a map where no one joins you. Worse, there are some significant server problems—bad news for an Internet-only game. At times, I could only connect to one overworked server. When all its servers are running, NETWAR has no latency problems, but once it's crowded, forget about it. The game also suffers from "shadow frags," where it reports that you died even when you were nowhere near the action—considering that player scores are posted, it can get undeservedly embarrassing.

If you want military, arcade action, get some quarters and find an arcade with METAL SLUG. Skip NETWAR.



LIGHTS ON, NOBODY HOME NETWAR has lots of players blowing each other up, but it also has numerous glitches and lame gameplay.

APPEAL: Give me a minute, I'm thinking, I'm thinking.

PROS: There *is* a $100,000 sweepstakes for players.

CONS: Control problems; server problems; crash problems; lack-of-fun problems.

CG RATED

Price: $39.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Internet (2–30 players); 1 CD per player.
Publisher: Headland Digital Media, Inc.
www.netwar.com

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Mass Irritation

by Tahsin Shamma



DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

A game with the name MASS DESTRUCTION is bound to elicit a testosterone-pumped fever for devastation. Well, settle down, because this game won't invoke anything but extreme boredom. MASS DESTRUCTION is the kind of game that's great for console gaming, but mediocre in the more complex world of PC games.

The basic premise behind the game? Blow stuff up. Story and realism has been tossed out the window in favor of the most simplistic, single-minded gameplay. Basically, you drive a tank in third-person perspective through a series of missions to destroy target objectives. There are missions that require you to rescue a hostage or avoid destroying specific buildings, but for the most part, everything begs for annihilation.



KILL THY NEIGHBOR The suburbs will never be the same once your tank rolls into town.

The first time I played the game, it was cool. The explosions are big and impressive, despite the mediocre graphics. But every time I played it thereafter it left me flat. For a game like this, the third-person perspective is a hindrance. You're not commanding a tank into a heavy barrage of mortar fire; you're driving a remote-controlled toy through a firecracker-laden obstacle course. All in all, MASS DESTRUCTION does simplistic 2D shooting well. Unfortunately, simplistic 2D shooting doesn't amount to much fun gameplay.

APPEAL: Anyone fond of blowing up everything in sight.

PROS: Cool variety of weapons; some tactical tank strategy.

CONS: Weak graphics; limited gameplay; too simplistic.

CG RATED ★★

Price: $34.99
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95 or DOS 6.22, 16MB RAM.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: IPX LAN (2-4 players); 1 CD per player.
Publisher: ASC Games (206) 655-0032
www.ascgames.com



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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY · INTERMEDIATE · ADVANCED

Monkey Shines

With a Treasure Chest of Big Laughs, THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND Is a Comic Classic

CG CHOICE

by Jeff Green

While most gamers associate LucasArts with their *Star Wars* games, for some, the company will always be revered as the purveyors of some of the greatest comic adventure games of all time. With SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD, DAY OF THE TENTACLE, and the two MONKEY ISLAND games, LucasArts virtually created its own genre—a winning combination of Warner Brothers cartoon–style animation and humor with traditional adventure gaming.

Now, after a hiatus of three years, LucasArts returns to adventure gaming in a big way with THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND, a game that proves to be not just a worthy successor to the MONKEY ISLAND series, but is—quite easily—the most entertaining adventure game of 1997.

A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR GUY

For those unfamiliar with the series, the MONKEY ISLAND games tell the ongoing tale of hapless, would-be pirate Guybrush Threepwood and his struggle against his nemesis, the evil undead pirate LeChuck, and the woman caught between the two: Guybrush's true love, Elaine Marley.

As THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND opens, in a beautifully animated cut-scene, the lame "It was all just a dream" ending of MONKEY ISLAND 2 has been conveniently forgotten (it's explained, kind of, later in the game), and we find Guybrush adrift at sea, hungry and thirsty and—typical for Guybrush—oblivious to the food and drink drifting by under his nose. Before he knows it, he's in the middle of a cannon battle between Elaine and LeChuck, and in no time at all, he finds himself a prisoner aboard LeChuck's ship.

As Guybrush, you must first find a way to escape from LeChuck's ship. Once you do escape and drift ashore, you unwittingly place a cursed ring on Elaine's finger, turning her to solid gold. To add insult to injury, the solid-gold Elaine is then stolen by pirates. Your primary objectives in the game are, of course, to search for a way to remove the curse and then find Elaine.

BARREL O' PUZZLES

MONKEY ISLAND is a very structured, six-act story, but within that framework there's a great deal of nonlinear action. Most of it takes place on two large islands, on which you can freely travel between locations and solve puzzles in a somewhat (though not always) random order. There are also a few places where the game makes you confront a specific predicament—such as being swallowed by a snake, trapped in quicksand, or trying to get your shipmates to stop singing—and won't let you proceed until you've figured it out.

Anyone who has ever played a LucasArts adventure will be right at home in CURSE—no big changes have been made to the same SCUMM engine that has driven all their adventure games up through FULL THROTTLE and THE DIG a few years back. Now, however, the interface is as seamless as could be and is all but invisible onscreen, leaving as much real estate as possible for the game's stylish, meticulously drawn graphics—the best they've ever done.

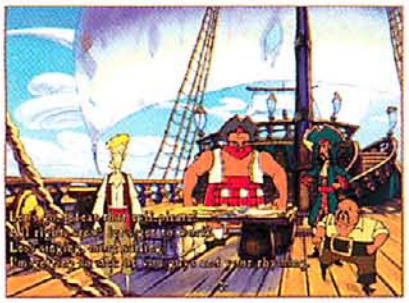
The gameplay, too, is nothing we haven't seen before; for the most part, it's standard point-and-click, inventory-based puzzle-solving. The game can be played on two settings, regular or "mega monkey," which is harder, but essentially just



System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, PCI graphics card, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95-compatible 16-bit sound card.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designers: Jonathan Ackley, Larry Ahern
Publisher: LucasArts Entertainment Company
San Rafael, CA
(415) 985-8227
www.lucasarts.com



AVAST, YE SCURVY DOG This weasely lemonade vendor (played by Gary Coleman) is just one of the memorably comic characters Guybrush Threepwood must face in THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND.



SEA CHANTEY HELL How to stop the pirates from singing? These guys are good, so you better find a word they can't rhyme.



LEMONHEAD, MEET TOFUHEAD Getting friendly with the natives on Blood Island means sticking a slab of wet tofu on your head.

adds more puzzles (or more steps to the same puzzles). Regardless of the setting, the puzzles are abundant and, for the most part, fairly simple—though they're tough enough to keep you from breezing through without a challenge.

The greatest thing about the gameplay is that, as in all LucasArts adventures, the designers consciously acknowledge that they're operating in a cartoon world. In fact, they revel in the absurdities of such a world. Thus, rather than try to offer some kind of half-baked "realistic" explanation as to how Guybrush could possibly carry around such things as a head-sized block of tofu, the game simply has him shove it casually down his pants.

What's particularly cool is that despite the fairly silly nature of what you pick up or how much you can carry, the puzzles themselves follow an internal logic—and that keeps the game on solid ground. In the game's most memorably grotesque puzzle, for example, you have to figure out how to get a tattooed map off the back of a sunbather. It'd never happen in the real world—I hope—but the way you do it here makes perfect game sense.

LucasArts also does the right thing in terms of never letting you really screw yourself over. You can't die (except in one of the game's most memorable puzzles, in which dying is the object) and you'll never enter a new section of the game without the minimum of what you need to complete it.

The only part I could have done without is the ridiculous, arcade-style ship combat in the middle of the game. Mercifully, you can toggle it to a very simple setting. The second part of the combat—dueling insults with the enemy ship captains—is hilarious, but goes on a tad too long.

WATCHOO TALKIN' BOUT?

The highlight of this game, of course, is the dialogue. LucasArts writes funnier scripts than anyone else, including most of Hollywood these days, and CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND features humor writing of the highest order. Whereas dialogue can often be a chore in adventure games—something to slog through to get the necessary clues—it's a complete joy here. As you choose your responses to the people you run into, you'll find yourself actively following dialogue trees that deliberately, blatantly have nothing to do with solving the game, just so you can get to the next joke. The designers waste no opportunity to be shamelessly silly in every conversation, yet they never penalize you for following useless paths—the correct choice will always be there when you're ready to proceed.

The game features the best comic voice-acting since, well, FULL THROTTLE, with one memorable character after another taking the stage, including a shifty lemonade vendor (played wonderfully by Gary Coleman), a snooty, please-hit-me cabana boy for an exclusive beach club, and, best of all, a disembodied skull named Murray, who if he had a shoulder, would have a very large chip on it. Murray, like Kramer on *Seinfeld*, manages to steal every scene he's in. If he had legs, he'd walk away with the game.

THAT'S IT?

Given all the time and energy spent to create comic payoffs for even minor puzzles and conversations throughout MONKEY ISLAND, it seems odd, then, that the ending—the game's only real disappointment—should be so abrupt and perfunctory, as if the designers suddenly ran out of time, money, or inspiration. It's still funny—especially if you sit through the credits—yet after a terrific buildup, there's really no payoff.

Still, the game is so great until then that there's no sense in denying it a perfect rating. Just as FALLOUT did recently for the reeling RPG genre, MONKEY ISLAND provides a case study in how to do things right, without reinventing the wheel. For those who have been turned off to the adventure game genre by the overabundance of portentous MYST clones or feeble FMV mysteries, THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND is the perfect tonic. Easily one of the best adventure games of the year, it joins LucasArts' hallowed pantheon of comic classics. Even those who've never played an adventure game might want to check it out. Computer gaming rarely gets more entertaining than this.



OH NO, NOT AGAIN Meet Guybrush's inner child near the end of CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND. Don't worry, it's a temporary condition.

APPEAL: All adventure gamers, fans of the old LucasArts comic adventures, pirate fetishists.

PROS: Just about everything: outstanding animation, plot, dialogue, and puzzles add up to the most satisfying adventure of the year.

CONS: Ends too quickly; final cutscene is a letdown.

CG RATED

If you don't do SOMETHING...



...SOMETHING will do SOMETHING to you.

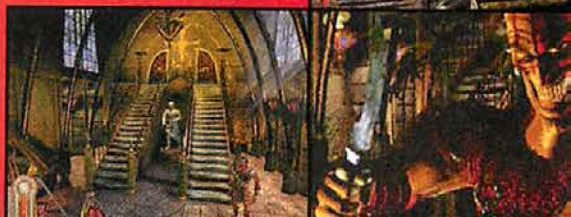


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Sharp as a Blade

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Blade Runner Is an Entertaining, Original, and Faithful Re-creation of the Sci-Fi Film Classic

by Allen Greenberg

CGW CHOICE

"This was not called execution. It was called retirement."

These words, backed by Vangelis' masterful score, mark the opening of one of the most powerful science-fiction films of the 1980s. Westwood Studios has now adapted *Blade Runner* to adventure gaming, and a very faithful adaptation it is at that. Indeed, it's safe to say that no other film has been so faithfully re-created on a computer.

Fanatics of the film should know, however, that the game mirrors only the tone and style of the film—it does not follow the same plot. Gone is the soul-searching Rick Deckard, the reluctant police/hunter of the film. In his place is fledgling Blade Runner Ray McCoy, who is far too worried about getting on with his job to stop and wonder whether he had ever retired a human by mistake. As McCoy, your task is to uncover and "retire" replicants who exist illegally on Earth. How he finishes in the story is up to you.

POINT AND SHOOT

It's Los Angeles in the year 2019, and during the course of the game you will travel from the city's highest pinnacle to its lowest dregs. Your goal, at least initially, is to track down replicants: those artificial humans now outlawed except for use in outer space. Lately, they have been showing up on Earth with a seriously bad attitude toward its few remaining animals, as evidenced by more than one massacre. What's behind the slaughter? Could it be the replicants are trying to hide something?

BLADE RUNNER unfolds in five acts, and the conclusion of the game depends upon how you play. The possible endgames vary greatly and range from the complete wipeout of the Earth-bound replicants to your total alliance with them.

The game's controls are fairly simple. You control McCoy's movement with the mouse. Blue cursors indicate possible exits, while green arrows indicate that some type of interaction is possible. Right-clicking draws your weapon and brings up a targeting reticle. The early portion of the game allows several episodes of target practice, but, unfortunately, much of this takes place at quite a distance away, so the participants appear quite tiny. There is a fair amount of shooting action in general, particularly toward the end of the game.

You don't have an inventory to work with. While you can gather items and put them to your advantage later in the game, you cannot examine, manipulate, or use these items in any way. Questioning characters is an important part of the game, and their answers are recorded for later reference. You have no control over the questions you ask, but different ones appear depending on your prior experiences as well as the attitude you assume. Missing the plot leads early



CITY LIGHTS BLADE RUNNER beautifully re-creates the stylish, moody atmosphere of the classic Ridley Scott film.



Price: $49.99
System Requirements: Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, 175MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit SVGA card with 2MB RAM, Microsoft-compatible mouse, Win 95-supported sound card.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Westwood Studios
Distributor: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
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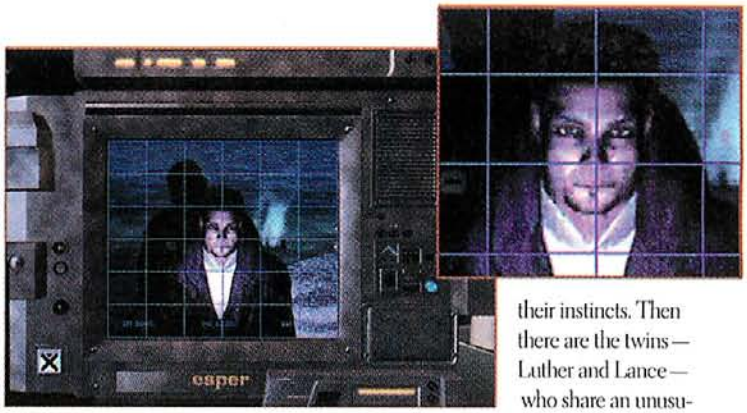


PHOTO SHOP Zero in on the game clues using your trusty Esper, the same photo-manipulation tool used by Harrison Ford in the film.

in the game can lead to incomplete questioning later on.

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

Besides McCoy, the game features a host of other memorable characters. Crystal Steel is a female Blade Runner who has a fondness for McCoy and often saves his hide from perforation and other abuse. McCoy's superior—and frequently the first to call McCoy into action—is Guzza. Although he is only temporarily filling the post, Guzza has earned the respect and admiration of his fellow officers, but his gruff exterior may hide some mysterious secrets.

The two major replicants are Clovis and Sadik, who are responsible for the game's initial massacres. McCoy's death frequently crosses their mind, and they are more than slightly inclined to follow their instincts. Then there are the twins—Luther and Lance—who share an unusually common point of view. Finally, there's Lucy. By all appearances a 14-year-old girl with pink hair, she regrets the harm she may have caused. The question of her guilt, however, seems to follow her wherever she travels. There are many others to be sure, and each of them has an effect on both McCoy and the story.

During the course of the game, you can record clues about people and events in a hand-held computer called the Knowledge Integration Assistant, or





LARA WHO? BLADE RUNNER features some of the most incredible 3D modeling in any game to date, as shown in this cut-scene between McCoy and the fetching Crystal Steel.

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Arena—Role Playing Game of the Year: Computer Gaming World, Computer Player, Game Machine, Games Magazine.

Daggerfall—Role Playing Game of the Year: Computer Gaming World, PC Gamer, PC Games, PC Today, CGDC Spotlight Award

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KIA. This device keeps track of conversations, key thoughts, photos, and other important information.

Fans of the film will remember the crucial scene in which Deckard produces a photograph by speaking to a computer. You have to use your mouse, but the computer work is still an important factor in the story. A gadget called the "Esper" does the work and is used several times in the course of the game.

IN THE MOOD

Graphically, BLADE RUNNER is nothing short of astounding. The cut-scenes use a form of 3D modeling that is unparalleled in computer game history, matching the quality of the film nearly perfectly. Likewise, the speaking cast handle their roles brilliantly. Fans of the film will remember the ever-present rain and fire that acted as a backdrop to the drama—this feel has been duplicated for the game. Topping it all off is the powerful Vangelis score, which complements the game as strongly as it did the film.

The real-time element adds an unusual degree of strategy to an adventure game. As in Broderbund's THE LAST EXPRESS, characters don't stand around forever in one place, so timing is often of critical value. This is particularly true of Lucy, who must be encountered at a certain point in the game in order to emerge successfully. You will frequently walk into life-or-death situations, and the only way to survive is through skin-of-your-teeth timing. The replicants in the game are more savage than those in the film and serve as deadly proof of how important it is to save your game often. They frequently appear out of nowhere and take McCoy's life without warning.

It is this element of action and timing—not any puzzles—that makes BLADE RUNNER truly challenging. For this reason, and for the incredible re-creation of the mood and atmosphere of the 1982 film, newcomers and experienced adventurers alike will find the game a compelling and unique experience.



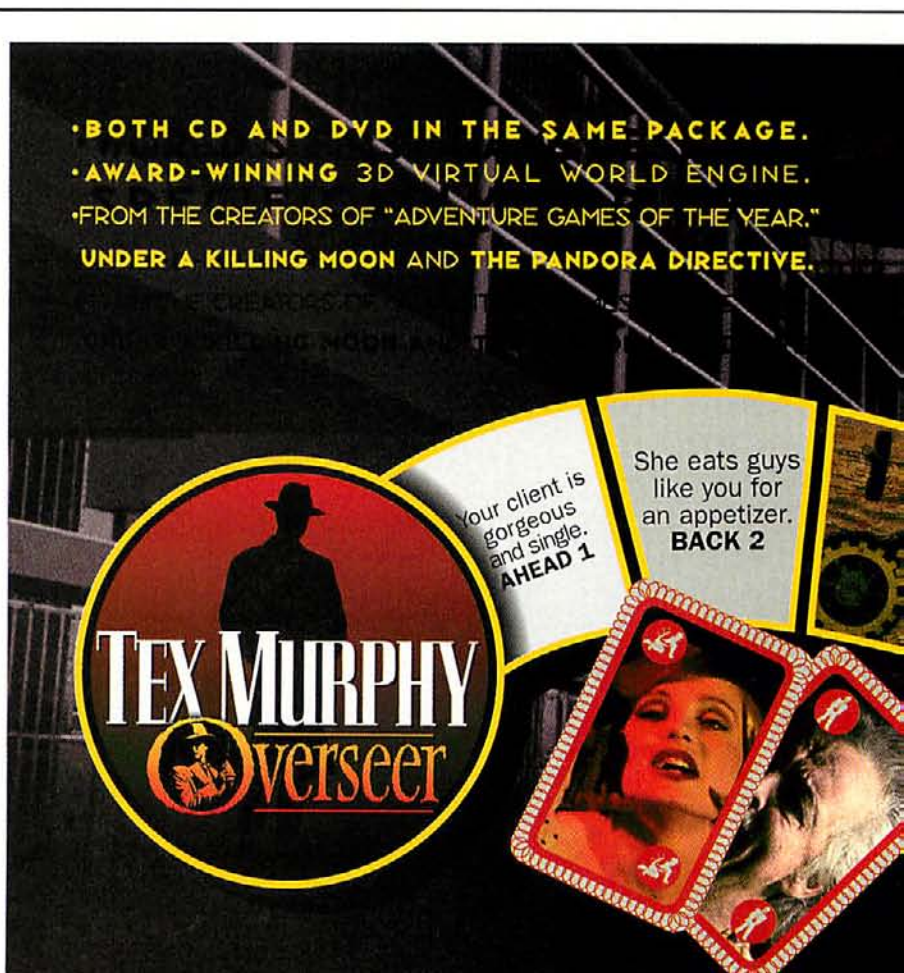
GET A CLUE You can store all of your visual and audio clues in the Knowledge Integration Assistant, an easy-to-use device that saves you from taking copious notes.

▸APPEAL: Fans of the film, adventure gamers looking for something different.

▸PROS: Compelling story, sound, and graphics; faithful to the spirit of the film.

▸CONS: Excess violence; in-game characters are small and low-res, especially compared to the cut-scenes.

CG RATED



THE KIND OF GAME YOU COULD ONLY DREAM OF AS A KID...



You win a tour of Alcatraz Island.
AHEAD 1

The tour guides are trying to kill you.
LOSE A TURN

A chess duel to the death. Now if you could just remember how to move the horsies.
LOSE A TURN



Congratulations! Once again, you've saved the world without anyone noticing.



3D EXPLORATION-FULL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.





The hitman is back and has a bone to pick... your clavicle.
LOSE 2 TURNS



A mad scientist gives you a wicked brain cramp.
LOSE A TURN

You match wits with a gorilla. Odds are slightly in you favor.
AHEAD 1/2

You bravely cross the Chasm of Death, despite having just eaten 2 macho burritos.
AHEAD 3

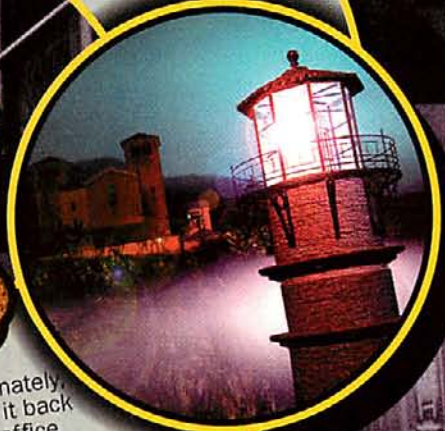
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AND CLIFF-HANGERS.



You discover an ingenious solution to an ancient Anasazi mystery.
AHEAD 1



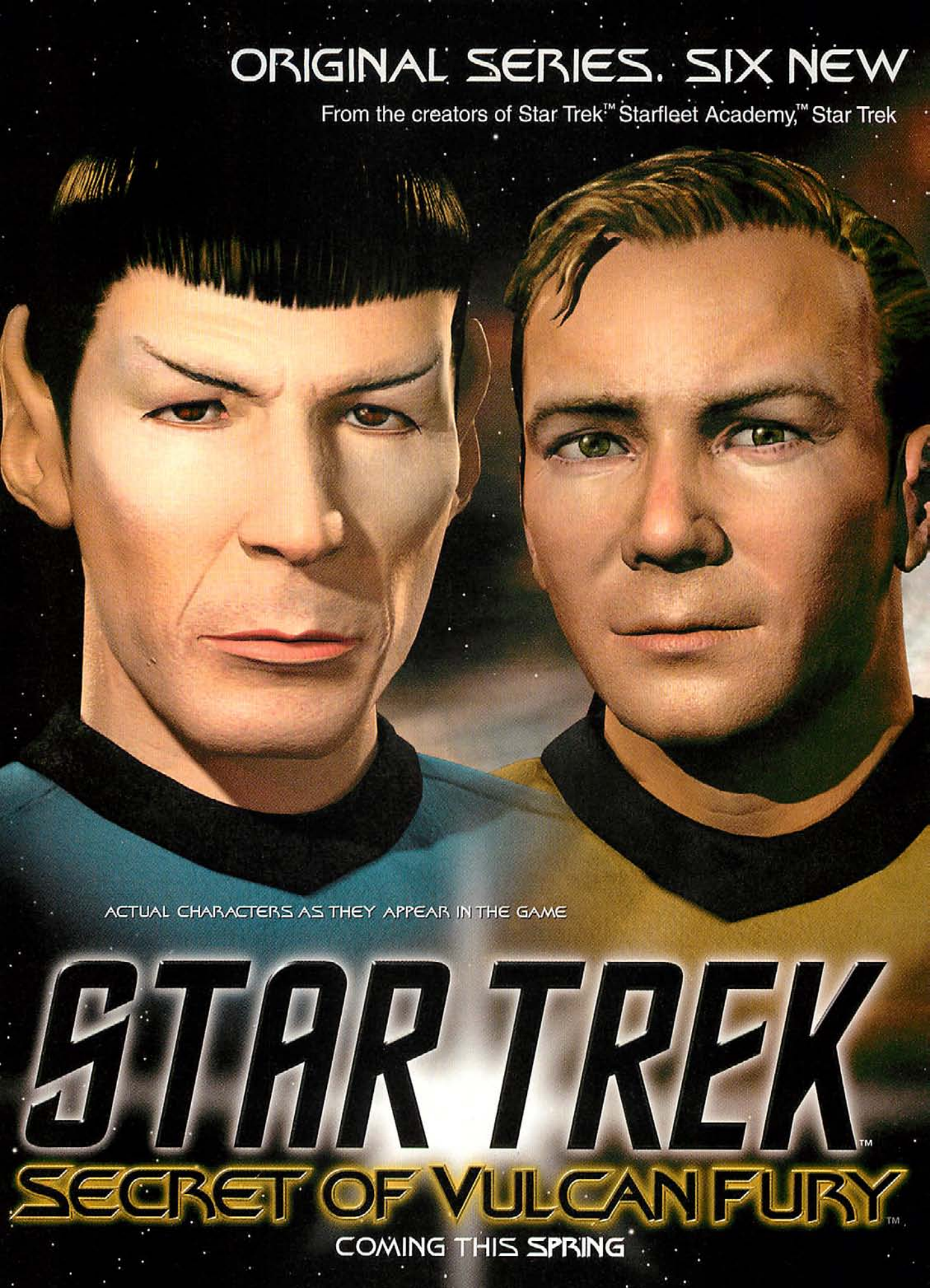
Unfortunately, you left it back at the office.
BACK 1



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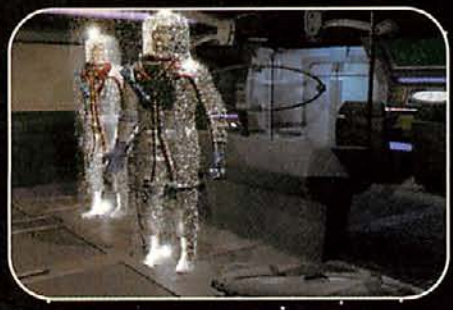
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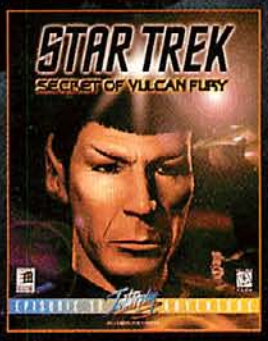
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-Adrenaline Vault

"Interplay's attention to graphic detail has resulted in a stunningly lifelike synthetic revival of the classic Star Trek players."

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RATING PENDING RP CONSULT RATED BY ESRB

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Broken Record

The Adventure Is Decent, But This Mirror Still Needs Polish

by Thierry Nguyen

Some people really should stay at home. Take George Stobbart, for example. Much like the Griswolds of *National Lampoon* fame, George gets mixed up in mayhem whenever he goes on vacation, especially in France. While the Griswolds were wise enough to go to France only once, George makes the mistake of returning, resulting in two adventure games: CIRCLE OF BLOOD, which centered on the Knights Templar, and now BROKEN SWORD: THE SMOKING MIRROR, which involves a ticked-off Mayan god of Death.

THE SMOKING MIRROR takes place sometime after the events in CIRCLE OF BLOOD. Having spent time back in the United States, George travels again to France to see Nico. As the game begins, George is trapped in a burning house, tied to a chair, and a spider is advancing toward his leg; Nico, meanwhile, has been kidnapped by Central American thugs. George frees himself and embarks on another worldwide adventure, this time involving Mayan folklore, a major drug cartel, and the imminent apocalypse. Heavy stuff for our vacationing hero.



QUIET ON THE SET This unexpected scene interrupts the story, but it also shows one of the new engine effects: shadowing.

SWORD PLAY

The gameplay in SMOKING MIRROR is identical to that in CIRCLE OF BLOOD and is your standard adventure game fare: running around the world for clues, solving puzzles, and talking to people. But the interface has been streamlined so that right-clicking is for looking and left-clicking is for using items or talking.

The designers have also enhanced the graphics engine. The character animations and backgrounds are still extremely well done, but now multiple layers have been added, which help to improve the look and feel of the game. Other improvements include shadows and translucency, all which can be adjusted in order to compensate for slower machines.

Finally, you'll play both George and Nico this time around, though the emphasis is still on George. Much like GABRIEL KNIGHT II: THE BEAST WITHIN and some of the LEISURE SUIT LARRY games, you switch between characters at specific points. The split isn't equal, as it seems that Nico's portions are shorter than George's.



A CLOCKWORK GOLD This puzzle near the endgame was one of the more tedious ones, as it involves lots of spinning and pushing.

BROKEN PLOT

The main flaws in the game lie in the story and the dialogue, which didn't engross me as much as the original did. CIRCLE OF BLOOD featured a solid plot filled with a strong sense of irony, as protectors became aggressors and vice versa, and you were unsure of who was the real enemy for much of the game. Here, the enemy is mundane and clearly defined. This villain just wants power and destruction, while the Neo-Templars wanted vengeance for injustices they suffered in the past. The story here ends up being a ho-hum "Thwart the evil god to prevent the apocalypse" tale.

The dialogue in SMOKING MIRROR is too uneven to improve matters. Though there isn't as much droning on as in the previous game, the conversations can still be boring. They are also punctuated with comedy that, while welcome at times, often feels out of place (especially with the character of The General and parts of Quaramonte).

Finally, although SMOKING MIRROR features some decent puzzles, the endgame is a letdown. There's one contrived puzzle—a mazelike affair involving levers and doors—and that's it. You walk through the door, and the cut-scene for the ending plays. No final, villain-thwarting puzzle sequence, just a click, and you're done.

All in all, BROKEN SWORD: THE SMOKING MIRROR is above average, but it's not great. While the engine and the graphics have been refined, there are some minor slips in plot, dialogue, and puzzles that bring the whole experience down a bit. If you're looking for a decent traditional adventure game to take up your time, this will do.



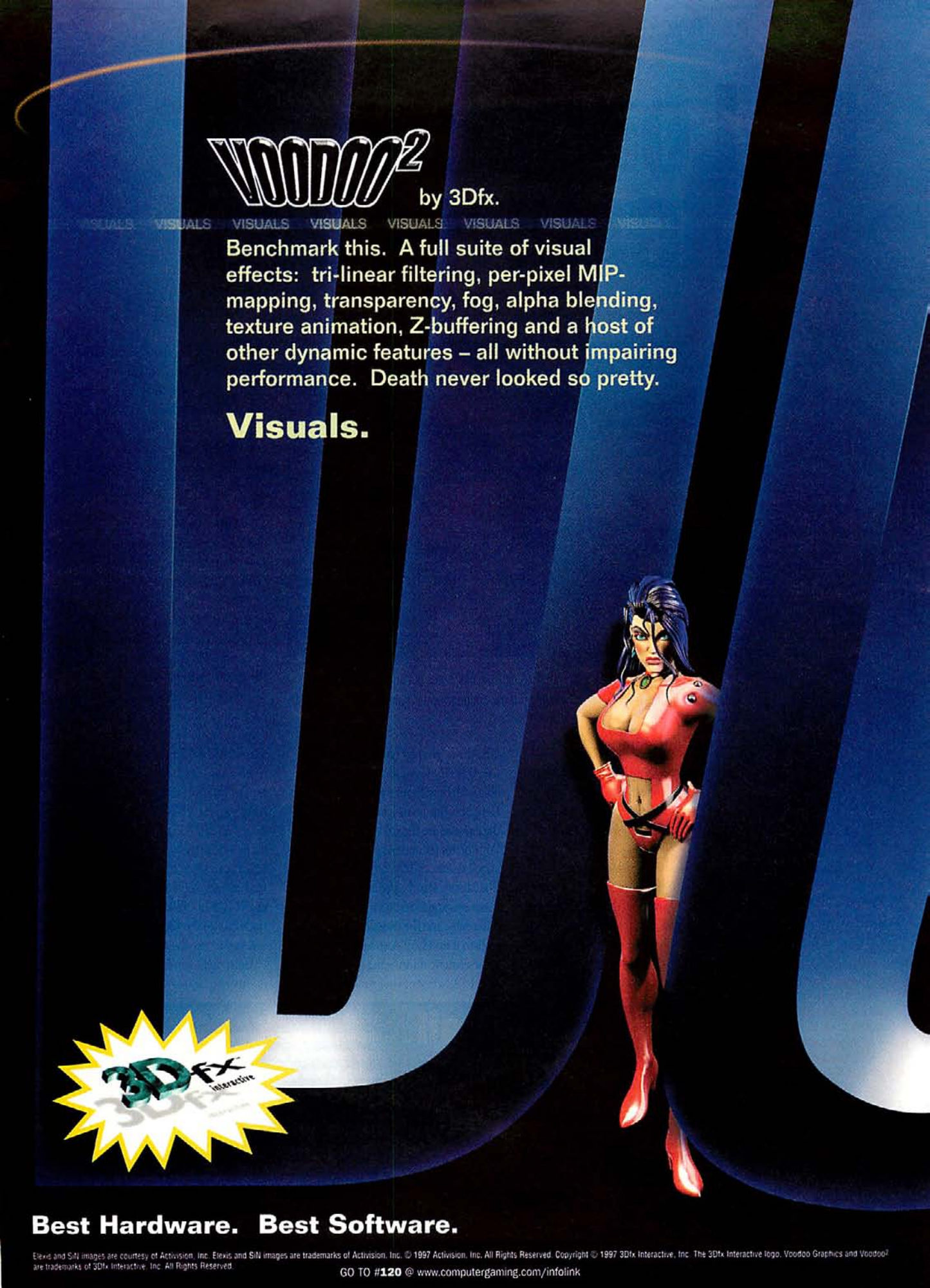
Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 60 or better, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 40MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM, Win 95–compatible sound and video cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Revolution Software
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607 or
(619) 549-0222
www.vie.com

APPEAL: Fans of the first game, newbie adventurers, veteran adventurers with time and money.

PROS: Refined engine and interface; historically accurate story; less chatter.

CONS: Weak plot; uneven dialogue; poor endgame.

CG RATED ★★★½

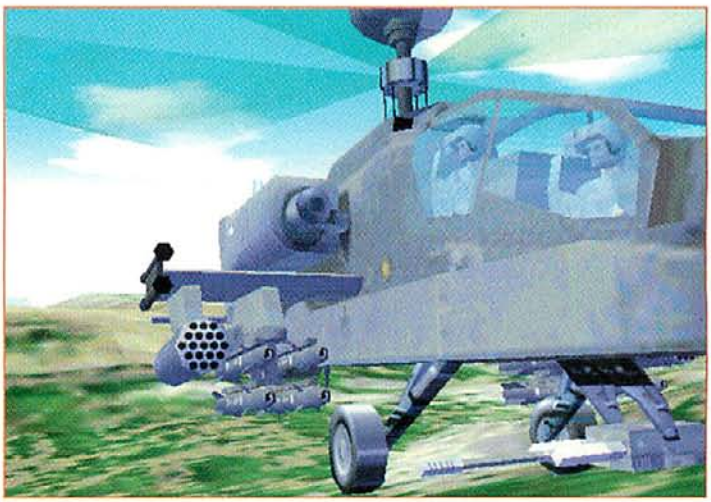

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Longbow Resurrection

CG CHOICE

This Helicopter Sim Is Even Better the Second Time Around



AH-64D LONGBOW APACHE The most capable helicopter gunship in the US inventory, the Apache is available with or without the Longbow radar system.



Price: $54.95
System Requirements: Pentium 133 (P200 recommended), Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 200MB hard-drive space, 2MB video card, sound card, 4x CD-ROM.
3D Support: 3Dfx (D3D patch in development).
Multiplayer Support: Modem, null modem, LAN (2–4 players), Internet TCP/IP (2 players); 1 CD per player.
Designers: Andy Hollis and Will McBurnett
Publisher: Jane's Combat Simulations
Austin, TX
(512) 434-4357
www.janes.ea.com

by Robin G. Kim

The sequel to *CGW*'s 1996 flight sim of the year retains its predecessor's focus on gritty realism and teeth-clenching combat action. It also introduces enough enhancements and new gameplay options to impress LONGBOW players and satisfy even jaded sim veterans.

LONGBOW 2 offers three helicopter models to fly. The star of the show is the US Army's premier helicopter gunship, the AH-64D Longbow Apache, available with or without the sophisticated Longbow fire-control radar. Backing up the Apache are the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior, for reconnaissance and light attack duties, and the UH-60L Blackhawk, which specializes in troop insertions and extractions. Each handles differently, and the overall flight-model realism is excellent despite the lack of some esoteric rotary-wing aerodynamic effects. As a test of your multitasking skills, you can hop between the pilot's seat and one crew position during flight on any of the aircraft. For the Apache and the Kiowa Warrior, the alternate station is the copilot/gunner's and copilot/observer's seat, respectively; Blackhawks have no equivalent, so you get to man the door guns instead.

CONTROL COMPLEX

Control panels and avionics systems have been modeled precisely. The AH-64D is by far the most complicated, with four MFDs (multifunction displays) and multiple radar modes, helmet-mounted display configurations, and electro-optical sensor displays. At the other end of the spectrum lies the UH-60L, with its broad array of analog instruments. The OH-58D's moderately complex layout revolves around its raison d'être: the ball-shaped Mast-Mounted Sight above its main rotor, which allows it to see over terrain without being seen. Ironically, the MMS is practically useless because its image is confined to a tiny MFD. (The images from the Apache's nose-mounted sensor can be displayed full-screen, making target identification much easier.) This "Mr. Magoo" MMS largely undermines the Kiowa Warrior's utility unless you use the target ID cheat key.

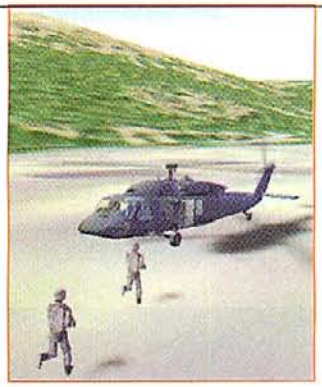
Both flight-model and systems complexity can be toned down, but the learn-

Campaign Trail

A dynamic campaign, in which the consequences of one mission carry forward into succeeding missions, theoretically guarantees unpredictability, increasing long-term play value. LONGBOW 2 incorporates just such a system, replacing LONGBOW's branching scripted-mission sequences.

Campaigns play out in roughly day-long turns. Each turn, the program creates a new set of missions for you, determines whether ground forces will attack or defend, and places reinforcements. A number of factors affect these decisions, including casualties from the previous turn, supply levels, troop movements, and the success or failure of your helicopters in their assigned missions. Occasionally, elaborate scripted missions are slipped in for added flavor.

Overall, the campaign system succeeds admirably at producing missions that are logically linked to the progress of the war. Unfortunately, the turn-based structure has a negative effect on the missions. At the outset of every mission, all choppers on both sides move out simultaneously. As a result, deadly helicopter-vs.-helicopter clashes over the front lines



UH-60L BLACKHAWK A high-performance infantry squad transport helicopter, the Blackhawk is used for troop insertions and extractions.

ing curve remains relatively steep. To help you climb this curve, the sim includes a comprehensive spiral-bound manual, an online encyclopedia, and hands-on training under the guidance of simulated instructor pilots. (Frame rate is slow during training, but it gets dramatically faster in actual play.)

THE REAL DEAL

LONGBOW 2 boasts perhaps the most visually and auditorily immersive combat environment of any flight sim. Spectacular graphical effects such as dynamic lighting, distance hazing, transparent smoke, and terrain filtering that eliminates pixelation (with or without a 3D card) are almost enough to make you forget that trees are still MIA. The virtual cockpit view—which you can pan manually or lock onto a target—models head motions with astounding realism, providing a visceral feeling of flight that is unmatched.

Frame rate on a P166 is tolerable at the lowest detail settings, and the sim still looks pretty good. When you hook up a 3D card sporting a 3DFX Voodoo or Voodoo Rush chipset, the frame rate and image quality increase dramatically. Owners of non-Voodoo 3D accelerators are currently stuck with the slower, less attractive 2D mode. (A Direct3D patch is in the works to support other high-end 3D chipsets.)

Sound effects and speech do just as much as graphics to draw you into the experience. During a typical mission, you might hear radio transmissions as other helo flights check in, status updates from HQ, or desperate calls for support from embattled units. Mission-specific call signs and a variety of voices help make it clear who is talking to whom. The chatter is not just atmospheric; you must often make snap decisions based on the information received. Ground troops to the south have spotted enemy armor moving toward their position. Do you put aside your assigned task to counter this unexpected offensive? Would you arrive in time to make a difference?

In pushing the envelope of sights and sounds, some compatibility problems exist. Some Voodoo users see graphical glitches, and a DirectX5 quirk keeps CH joystick hats from being handled properly. A patch is planned to fix these problems.

FOUR PAIR BEATS TWO OF A KIND

In the first LONGBOW, you had just one wingman to worry about. LONGBOW 2 gives you responsibility for up to four flights of two. Each aircraft is operated by one of 16 crews in your squad, all of whom get better with experience—if they survive. Play options include instant action, custom single missions, canned single missions, and two dynamic campaigns (the first three play just like campaign missions, but without the surrounding context). One campaign hypothesizes a conflict between UN and Iranian forces in the rugged terrain of Azerbaijan, while the other simulates US Army exercises at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin. Multiplayer functionality is seamlessly integrated into the game, allowing others to join in a single mission or campaign as wingmen, flight leaders, or as copilots sharing the same craft. The NTC scenario even allows head-to-head campaign action, mixing humans and AI crews on both sides. Connections are a snap to set up and work well except for some quirks in the pilot/copilot mode.



KIOWA WARRIOR A scout and light attack helicopter, the OH-58D serves as the US Army's eyes on the battlefield.

LONGBOW 2 is a textbook example of how to make a successful sequel. By taking the excellent flight and systems modeling from the original and adding the features that sim fans cry out for—eye-popping graphics, multiple aircraft to fly, dynamic campaigns, and full multiplayer support—the designers have created a benchmark sim far beyond its award-winning predecessor.

are annoyingly common. This predictable start can be exploited by rushing to the front and laying an ambush or by hiding out until the enemy helos have gone home, then running wild in the enemy's backfield. The missions are more realistic if you play them straight, but frequent air-to-air combat is unavoidable.



MISSION CONTROL The mission planner in LONGBOW 2 is exceptionally full-featured, offering thorough briefings and letting you tailor all flight plans, loadouts, and crew assignments. However, its interface could be more convenient to use, and debriefs are rather terse.

APPEAL: Anyone interested in helicopter sims or realistic flight sims in general.

PROS: Oozes realism; gorgeous graphics (especially with a Voodoo card); immersive environment; true dynamic campaigns; thorough multiplayer support; great long-term replayability.

CONS: Demanding hardware requirements; no mission recorder; compatibility problems on some PCs; dynamically generated mission structure results in too much air-to-air combat; Direct3D support requires upcoming patch.

CG RATED

CG-ROM

Check out the exclusive ThrustMaster programming utility for LONGBOW 2 on this month's CG-ROM.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Super Hornet

F/A-18 HORNET Gets a 3D Facelift

by Robin G. Kim



VOODOO MAGIC The unaccelerated polygon graphics update smoothly on lesser machines, but the looks improve tremendously when run on a 3D card based on the 3DFX Voodoo or Voodoo Rush chipset.

As the state of the art in realistic flight simulations advances, creating a competitive sim from scratch becomes increasingly expensive. Thus, it's no big surprise that F/A-18 KOREA is an evolution of its predecessor, F/A-18 HORNET 3.0. But owners of the earlier title must ask whether the added features are worth the price of a new game.

FAMILIAR TERRITORY

The basic simulation engine in KOREA is almost identical to the patched version of HORNET 3.0, with a few minor improvements, so it inherits nearly all of that game's strengths and weaknesses. The amazingly complex avionics modeling of the original continues in KOREA. With a dozen different radar modes and multiple weapons-delivery techniques, the simulated combat is satisfyingly deep. Excellent flight-model feel makes flying a joy, whether you're dogfighting or sweating through a carrier landing at night. Plane performance is still inaccurate in some respects—especially when pushing the envelope—but only realism fanatics will probably notice or care.

KOREA includes 28 canned single-player missions set in a hypothetical second Korean War, 6 multiplayer missions flown over NAS Fallon in Nevada, and the same 6 training flights as its forerunner. All are well-designed, offering a good variety of air-to-air and air-to-ground action. Although missions are prescripted, randomized enemy placement provides some replay potential. Later missions are rather tough to win, but various enemy AI settings can be adjusted to suit novices as well as experts. Flight times are generally short, and mission planning is nonexistent—just select a loadout from the large assortment of ordnance and go.

Two wingmen accompany you on most single-player missions. You can issue them an array of commands for air-to-air work, but—oddly—they cannot be ordered to attack ground targets.

THAT VOODOO YOU DO

The polygon graphics engine from HORNET 3.0 is still around, offering high frame rates at resolutions from 640x480 to 1024x768 even on mid-range Pentiums (albeit at the expense of slowing game time drastically when overloaded), but KOREA now also supports 3D accelerator cards based on the 3Dfx Voodoo and Voodoo Rush chipsets. Enabling 3D acceleration transforms the plain polygons into some of the prettiest visuals ever seen in a flight sim—with no noticeable performance hit.

Other new features include a well-written manual (a godsend for those who don't want to sit through multimedia tutorials), additional cockpit views, and a mission builder. The new views consist of 17 fixed cockpit views, which provide complete visual coverage with no unrealistic blind spots, plus a padlock view mode that allows you to track incoming missiles as well as nearby bandits.

The mission builder is an impressive piece of work, allowing you to finely script the actions of both aircraft and ground vehicles through an efficient and intuitive interface. Custom missions can be shared, offering gamers who have Internet access a potentially unlimited number of scenarios to fly.

F/A-18 KOREA is clearly a more complete package than its predecessor, with long-term replay value. If you're not put off by the lack of a proper campaign, this is definitely worth a look.



Price: $45
System Requirements: Pentium, Windows 95 or Windows NT, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive. *Macintosh:* PowerPC, System 7.0 or greater, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive (review based on PC version).
3D Support: 3Dfx
Multiplayer Support: Modem, null modem, IPX network (2–4 players), Internet TCP/IP (2–4 players); 1 CD per 4 players. *Macintosh:* Modem, null modem, AppleTalk (2–4 players), Internet TCP/IP (2–4 players); 1 CD per 4 players; cross-platform connections not supported.
Designer: Trey Smith
Publisher: Graphic Simulations Corporation
Dallas, TX
(972) 386-7575
www.graphsim.com

APPEAL: Sim veterans who enjoy complex systems modeling, or anyone looking for a realistic sim.

PROS: Outstanding avionics modeling; gorgeous 3D-accelerated graphics; high frame rate without a 3D card; impressive mission builder.

CONS: Flight model flaws; no campaign; inconsistencies in multiplayer combat when graphics engine gets bogged down.

CG RATED

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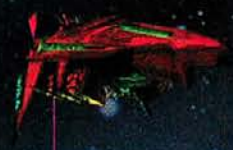


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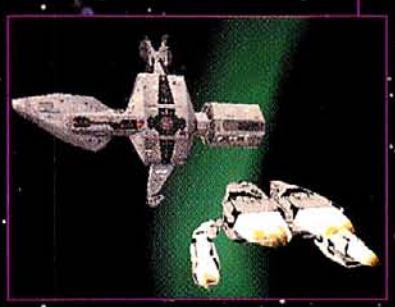
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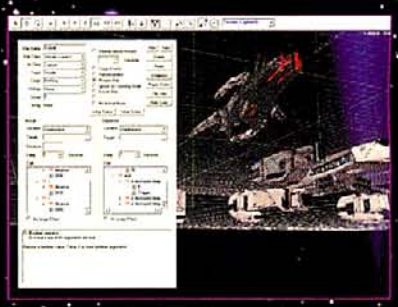
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Mike Kulas
President of Volition and Designer of the award winning Descent and Descent II

We learned a lot when we wrote the Descent A.I. and we applied all that to *Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War.* It's in a whole new class. **The A.I. system is three times as large**, much deeper and much more flexible. Every ship has its own set of goals it pursues through an environment that is the richest ever. We observed how human players handle complex situations and coded the A.I. to do the same intelligent things.

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Euro Raptor

CGW CHOICE

The Creators of EF2000 Tackle the Ubiquitous F-22

by Denny Atkin

Following up its 1995 *CGW* Premier Award–winning EF2000, Digital Image Design is back with a simulation of another high-tech fighter, the F-22 Raptor. As the fifth F-22 sim to come out in the past year, F-22 AIR DOMINANCE FIGHTER (ADF) has a lot to prove in a crowded market. But with its detailed simulation of the F-22's 21st-century cockpit, a host of engaging missions, and a unique AWACS mode, it's a standout.



SAFE AT HOME Even if you suffer major systems damage, you may be able to slide to a safe belly landing.

UNDER THE CANOPY

EF2000 fans who hop into the cockpit of DID's F-22 will find familiar territory. The high-tech, multifunction display–based cockpit has been updated to reflect the F-22's highly automated systems. The virtual cockpit, excellent view padlock, and full-screen MFD views are all tweaked versions of those in EF2000.

If you compare ADF's cockpit to Lockheed promotional literature and articles in *Aviation Week*, it's evident that its simulation of the real F-22's systems is more authentic than any other sim. Offensive, defensive, situational, and systems MFDs are thoroughly modeled, as are the F-22's radar, infrared search and track, and LANTIRN systems. (The latter aren't fitted to the real pure-fighter F-22, but likely will be if the plane is used in air-to-ground role.) To succeed at many missions, you'll need to learn how to set the EMCON (EMission CONditions), which control how stealthily the plane's systems are operating.

While the systems modeling is top-notch, the flight model is missing a few bells and whistles. The real F-22 has automatic 2D thrust-vectoring (this points engine thrust up and down to allow you to pull the plane's nose to seemingly impossible angles), but ADF forces you to engage vectoring by holding down the Tilde key (~). This makes the plane's response more predictable, but I'd welcome an automatic mode in any updates. Also, the fly-by-wire systems in the F-22 actually change the aircraft's responsiveness to control input depending on your situation; for instance, it tames handling during landing. While NovaLogic's F-22 RAPTOR models this feature, it's absent in ADF.

These are the only noticeable omissions in the aircraft modeling. Speed bleed in turns, performance changes at altitude, and the capabilities of various aircraft types all seem right on. Flight models are noticeably more detailed than those in EF2000.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, 70MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM, SVGA video card capable of 800x600x16-bit color, sound card, mouse.
3D Support: 3Dfx, Direct3D.
Multiplayer: Modem, direct cable, LAN (2–8 players), Internet TCP/IP (2–8 players); CD not required.
Designer: Digital Image Design
Publisher: Ocean of America
San Jose, CA
(408) 289-1200
www.did.com



GROUND POUNDER The F-22s here are equipped for mud-moving missions; like the F-15, the plane will probably eventually be tasked for ground strikes.

CAN O' MISSIONS

ADF sports four types of missions: Instant Action, your basic "shoot everything" quick combat;

Simulator, single stand-alone missions; Tours of Duty, linked, scripted missions that form campaigns; and Multiplayer missions. The dynamic campaign found in EF2000 is AWOL (see the "Total Air War" sidebar for further details).

Most of the Simulator missions focus on training. They cover not only basic flight, but also weapons tactics, using the F-22's stealth and proper utilization of wingmen. This is also where you'll find the AWACs missions.

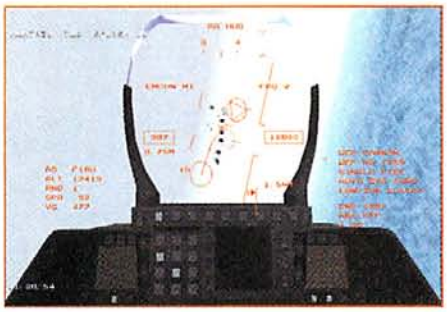
In the Tour of Duty section you'll find three campaigns. While EF2000 had a dynamic campaign that generated missions based on the outcome of previous combat, the missions here are prescripted. On the plus side, these carefully crafted missions are generally more interesting than the dynamic campaign missions in EF2000, which quickly grew repetitive. On the downside, once you've worked through the training missions and the 30 Tour of Duty missions, all you can do is repeat your experiences until the campaign discs become available.

The missions themselves pose a number of interesting challenges—you'll need to use your smarts, not just brute force, to win many of them. Mission goals usually involve protecting or destroying a particular aircraft or ground target, then returning alive to your departure air base. This can be annoying, because while the AWACS will happily point you to a divert air base if your plane is heavily damaged, landing anywhere other than the preprogrammed base will result in mission failure.

ADF includes nine multiplayers missions, with different weather conditions, battle locales, and aircraft armament. They range from guns-only deathmatches to multiple team missions in which the object is to defend your air base while taking out the enemy's. Up to eight players can participate, but as of this writing there was no online server along the lines of F-22 RAPTOR's NovaWorld.

Total Air War

ADF doesn't have an EF2000-style dynamic campaign, but that shortcoming will be corrected this summer with the release of the TOTAL AIR WAR expansion pack. Digital Image Design has been working with U.S. air-campaign planners from Desert Storm and visiting various other air forces to ensure that the TAW campaign simulates actual battle doctrine with unprecedented accuracy. TAW's mission planner will let you alter dynamic campaign missions or create custom missions for the Simulator and Tour of Duty modules. You'll also be able to watch the missions play out from the overview screen, control allied forces from an AWACS station, or jump into the action in the cockpit of an F-22.



SPLASH ONE Don't fly through the debris after you shoot down an enemy or you may suffer damage.

CANDID CAMERA

Ever have a mission end suddenly without ever seeing the guy who blew you to pieces? With ADF's Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI) module, you can record and replay both single- and multiplayer missions. The replay doesn't use the game's 3D engine, but rather a military-style wireframe display. Although it's been visually spruced up, it looks very similar to the ACMI displays I saw at Tyndall AFB when I visited for my F-15 familiarization flight in 1994.

The graphics and sound in ADF are top-notch. With the game supporting both 3Dfx Glide and Direct 3D (with enhanced texture support for AGP chips like the Intel 740), the graphics in general look superb. There is a bit of pixelation in city areas, and visible seams where some terrain tiles intersect, but these glitches are overshadowed by the lovely desert and rolling hill textures and the transparent fog and cloud effects. Frame rate was good on a P166 running in 2D mode, and silky-smooth on the same system running under Glide with a Pure 3D card. Sound is very good, with wonderful stereo effects.

Along with a good manual and thorough online documentation, the package includes *Allies and Adversaries*, a wonderful book from the editors of *World Air Power Journal*, giving background on all the planes in the sim. Aviation buffs will love this reference, which could easily sell for $20 itself.

ADF isn't without its quirks and omissions. You can't choose your plane's loadout before a mission, you occasionally see objects through hills, and the lack of a mission builder means play will eventually grow repetitive. Still, this is one of the most addictive jet sims I've played in a long time, and by the time it starts to get stale, the TOTAL AIR WAR add-on should be around to rejuvenate it.

Command and Control

Along with the F-22 missions, ADF includes a number of AWACS missions, which will give you a taste of the upcoming TAW expansion pack. Simulating a workstation in an E-3 Airborne Warning And Control System, the AWACS missions let you specify air and ground targets for allied functions. You can play an entire mission in real-time strategy mode, specifying routes and directing planes to targets, or you can jump in and out of the cockpits of F-22s in the combat arena.



APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys authentic modern jet-fighter simulations; EF2000 fans looking for a sim with a similar flavor.

PROS: Good flight modeling; engaging missions; detailed aircraft systems; innovative AWACS mode.

CONS: Canned missions combined with the lack of a mission editor limit replay value; thrust vectoring not handled authentically.

CG RATED ★★★★

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ONLINE GAMING REVIEW
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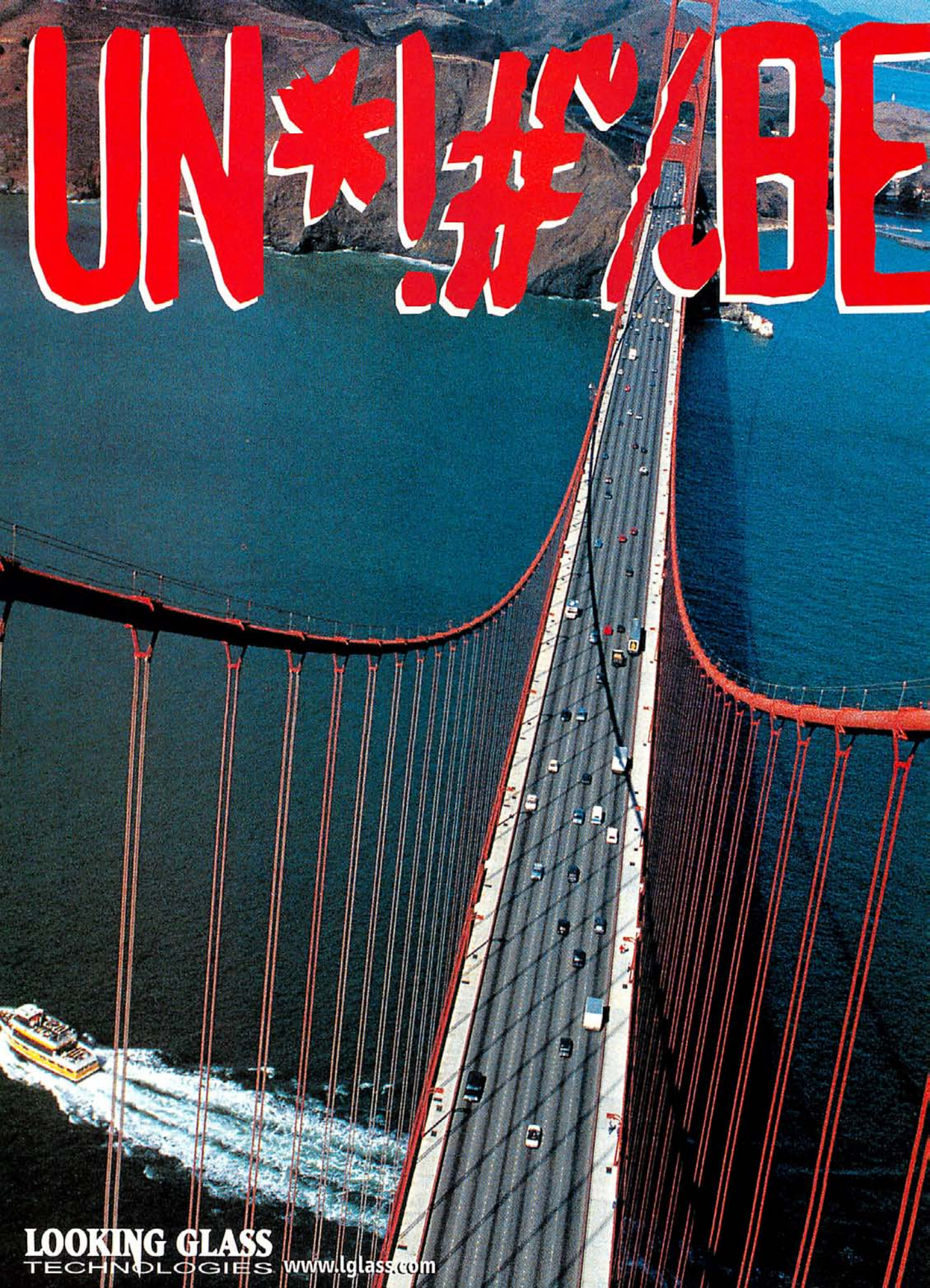
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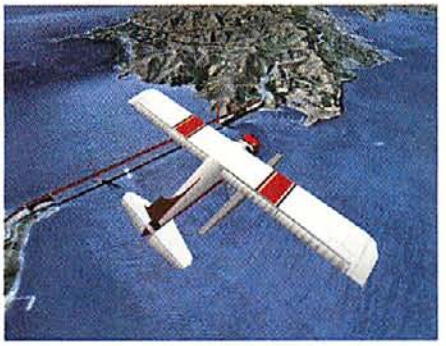
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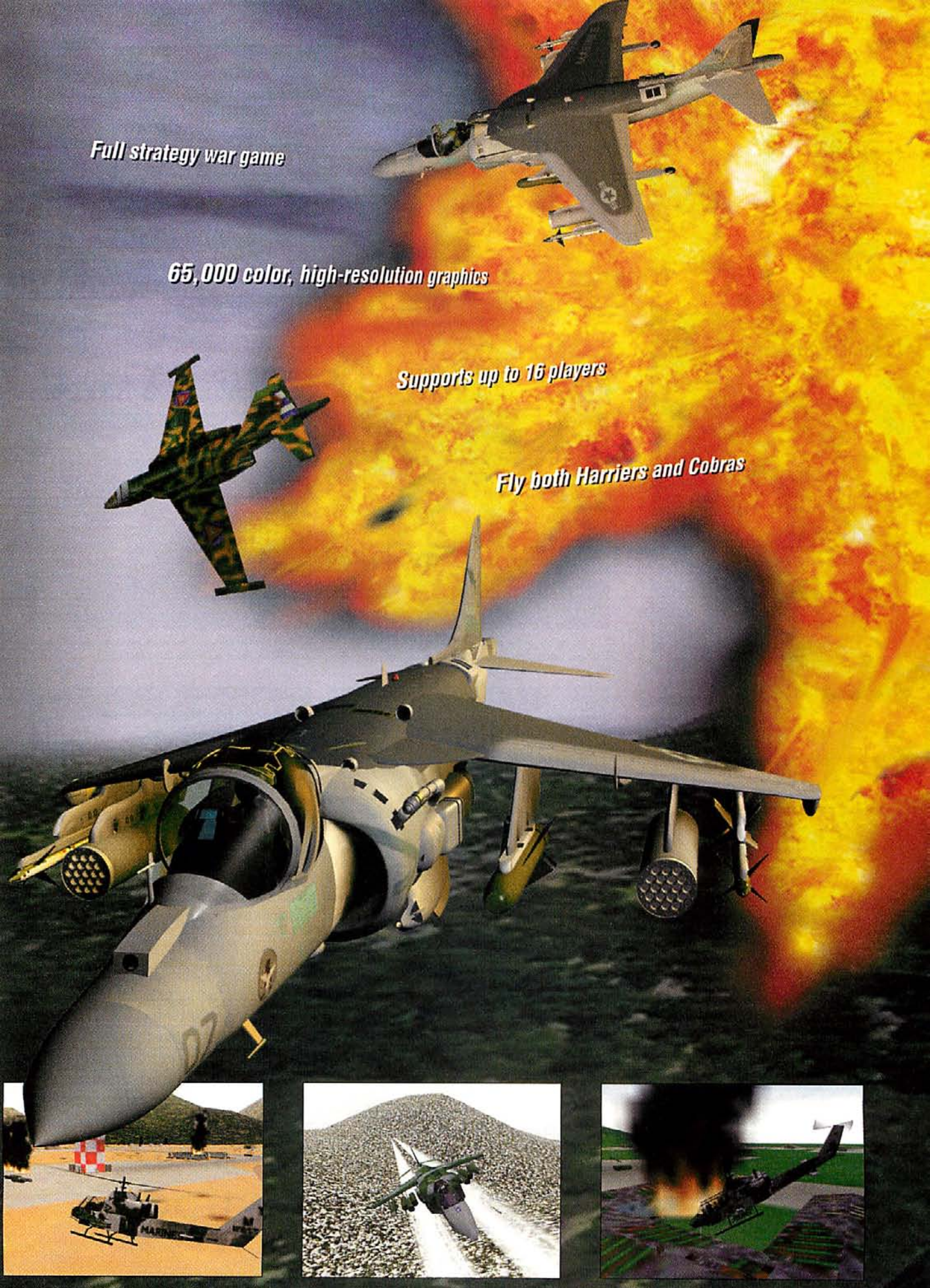
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www.fn2.com

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Getting Serious

NovaLogic's Second F-22 Sim Gets More Serious, But Still Emphasizes Action

by Denny Atkin

Apparently stinging from criticism that last year's F-22 LIGHTNING II was a bit light in the realism department, NovaLogic teamed with Lockheed-Martin (the company that's building the real F-22) to develop a more authentic simulated aircraft. The resulting product, F-22 RAPTOR, sports an interesting combination of realistic plane performance in a decidedly action-oriented environment.

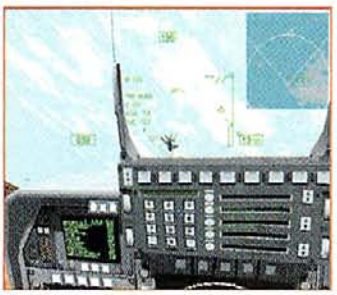


RAPTOR DOWN An F-22 Raptor meets the business end of a Sidewinder missile in a game on NovaLogic's NovaWorld server.

AIRPLANE BY LOCKHEED

The game box has Lockheed-Martin and NovaLogic logos on it—and that's not just the result of a licensing agreement. Test pilots for the YF-22 and F-22 development programs consulted with NovaLogic on the sim's flight model, and RAPTOR shows clear signs of the expert input.

NovaLogic's first sim had a very lightweight flight model, with odd takeoff behavior, rudders that would allow flat turns at supersonic speeds, and too much energy retention in maneuvers. Here you'll find dramatic improvements: Takeoffs feel right, rudders are toned down, and heavy maneuvering takes its toll on your airspeed. Roll rates vary with altitude and airspeed. And as with the real F-22, the jet's fly-by-wire handling is tamed when you drop the landing gear.



LOCK AND FIRE F-22 LIGHTNING II vets will like the new EF2000-style padlock view for tracking enemy planes.

The F-22's advanced offensive and defensive instrument displays are modeled here as well, but that makes little difference in actual gameplay. Although you can glance down and view any of the instruments on the panel, the pop-up radar display and HUD give you nearly all the information you need—look down only to check system damage. While the HUD and displays match up well with publicly available F-22 information, the systems aren't modeled with the level of detail you'll find in F-22 AIR DOMINANCE FIGHTER or iF-22. For instance, the real F-22's radar's emissions are tunable depending on the combat situation and importance of stealth; this has only on and off settings.

CAMPAIGN BY HOLLYWOOD

While the aircraft modeling sets new standards for NovaLogic, the campaign is just an incremental upgrade. Although the box and documentation refer to "dynamic campaigns," in fact, the missions are prescripted. If you fail a mission, you must fly it again, and you'll see the exact same sequence of events on your next attempt.

What *is* new is that targets you take out in one mission stay destroyed throughout the campaign. So if you use a leftover JDAM bomb to take out a factory that was to be a target in a later mission, you'll find yourself with a different target later on. Similarly, taking out lots of extra fighters on early missions should help keep you from facing overwhelming odds later on. While this does make for a more interesting campaign than one with no variance on replay, it's far from what's considered "dynamic" in the sim industry. Many players will be content with the mission structure that *is* there, but shame on NovaLogic for misrepresenting it in attempt to drag in gamers looking for a true dynamic campaign.

To move on to the next mission, you



Price: $44.95
System Requirements: Pentium 133 (P200 recommended), Windows 95, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 4x CD-ROM, mouse, sound card; joystick recommended.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, direct serial, LAN (2–16 players, 1 CD per player), Internet (2–16 players, 1 CD per player), NovaWorld (2–128 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: Randy Casey
Publisher: NovaLogic
Calabasas, CA
(818) 880-1997
www.novalogic.com

must accomplish all the primary mission goals. These vary, and include destroying particular flights of enemy aircraft, taking out a certain ground target, or ensuring the survival of an escorted flight. On one mission, an enemy flight that was a primary goal never showed up—even when I replayed the mission—and I was forced to restart the campaign. (Thankfully, it was only the third mission.)

The five campaigns have a Hollywood feel, evident from the very first mission, when your wingman goads you to disobey a "return to base" order and take out another flight of enemy aircraft. Exciting, but hardly authentic. Wingman AI and control is much better here than in the previous game—your wingies are now a valuable resource for taking out enemy targets. Enemy AI is improved as well, with gunfights fairly challenging.

NOT IN THE CARDS

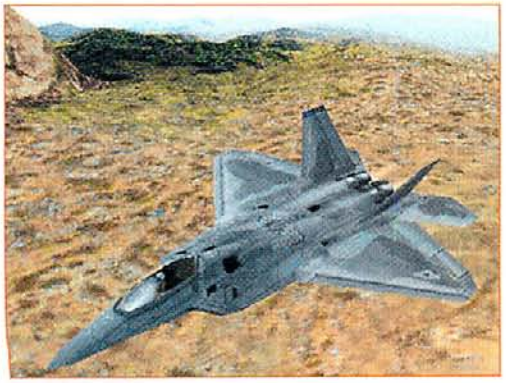
F-22 RAPTOR's graphics engine looks great on a 2D card. Enhancements over the original include better lighting, more detailed aircraft (including the best-looking Raptor model of the five F-22 sims), and software filtering to eliminate blockiness at low altitudes. There are many nice eye-candy details, such as flights of Harriers doing VTOL launches to your side as you barrel down the runway.

A variety of terrain areas, times of day, and weather conditions keep things visually interesting in the sim. As with F-22 LIGHTNING II, the terrains are a bit exaggerated, with 10,000-foot mountains popping up everywhere to give a sense of speed and provide good terrain masking in dogfights.

On a P166 or better, you should see fairly smooth frame rates; playing on a P133 I found things particularly choppy. Look for a noticeable speed boost on MMX PCs, but don't count on your 3D card being any help; RAPTOR doesn't support 3D hardware. This isn't a big issue on P166MMX or faster machines, but owners of slower PCs equipped with 3D hardware will yearn for 3D support.

Sound has been done very nicely here, with Dolby stereo support and a very wide variety of digitized in-flight communications, which were recorded by Marine pilots.

While the action-oriented, marginally variable campaign may frustrate some of the more hard-core pilots, the flashy missions keep the simulator interesting for the more casual gamer. This is not an intimidating game, and the realistic flight-model means beginners who move on to more hard-core sims won't have to unlearn any bad habits. Quirks aside, F-22 RAPTOR is interesting and action-packed, and should provide plenty of enjoyment and fun for the sim pilot.



BEAUTIFUL BIRD Despite the sim's lack of 3D support, the Raptor here is the best looking of any F-22 sim.

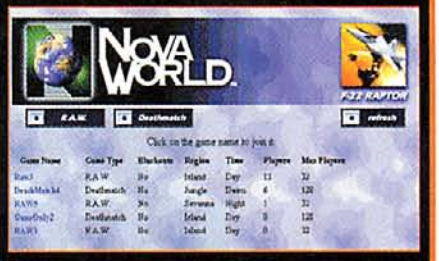
Online Fracas

F-22 RAPTOR supports DirectPlay multiplayer games over modem, null-modem cable, LAN, or Internet. But in addition to allowing you to host up to 16 players on your own PC, NovaLogic has gone a step further with the NovaWorld online matchmaking service. This allows you to join games with more than 100 other Raptor pilots via the Internet.

At launch, NovaWorld supported two game types: a simple deathmatch mode and the more intriguing Raptor Air War (RAW). In the latter game, you join one of two teams and attempt to destroy the enemy team's air base. Each player can choose to be a fighter, armed with guns and Sidewinders, or a bomber, with only the gun and JDAM bombs. NovaLogic's programmers did a superb job with the multiplayer code—even in games with more than 30 players, there was no perceptible lag in close-in combat.

There is room for improvement, however. You get assigned to whichever team has fewer members when you join a NovaWorld RAW game, making it tough to set up group versus group combats, and often putting you on the same team as your former enemies, should you leave and reenter the game. Also, flying radar-cold only seems to affect detection by SAM sites, making sneak attacks on the enemy difficult.

Still, it's a blast, and play is free at the moment (NovaLogic makes fine-print references to it being free during its beta period, implying that a charge may be instituted at some future date). NovaLogic promises to enhance the multiplayer functionality with automatic updates, with running scores, squadron play, and ladders coming soon.



NET VALUE Up to 128 players can fight in the same arena on the NovaWorld Internet server.

APPEAL: Flight-sim fans who want realistic aircraft performance but don't mind a little *Top Gun* in the storyline.

PROS: Top-notch flight modeling; some of the best 2D-card graphics around; superb support for multiplayer Internet play.

CONS: No 3D-card support; campaign mode isn't really dynamic as claimed, which forces you to fly unsuccessful missions again.

CG RATED

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Jammed Gears

Activision's Giant Robots Have Fallen, and They Can't Get Up

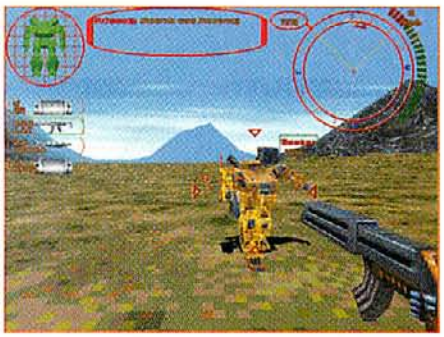
by Greg Fortune

Activision's MECHWARRIOR games have long been regarded as the best entries in the "giant robot simulation" subgenre. And unfortunately, despite high hopes, it appears that the company's HEAVY GEAR won't be stealing any of the thunder from the MECHWARRIOR series. Somehow, I get the feeling that the HEAVY GEAR design team must be as upset about this as we are, because it's obvious that this game could have been another big hit with a couple of months more work. As it stands, the game feels more like a beta than a finished product and is woefully incomplete in many areas.

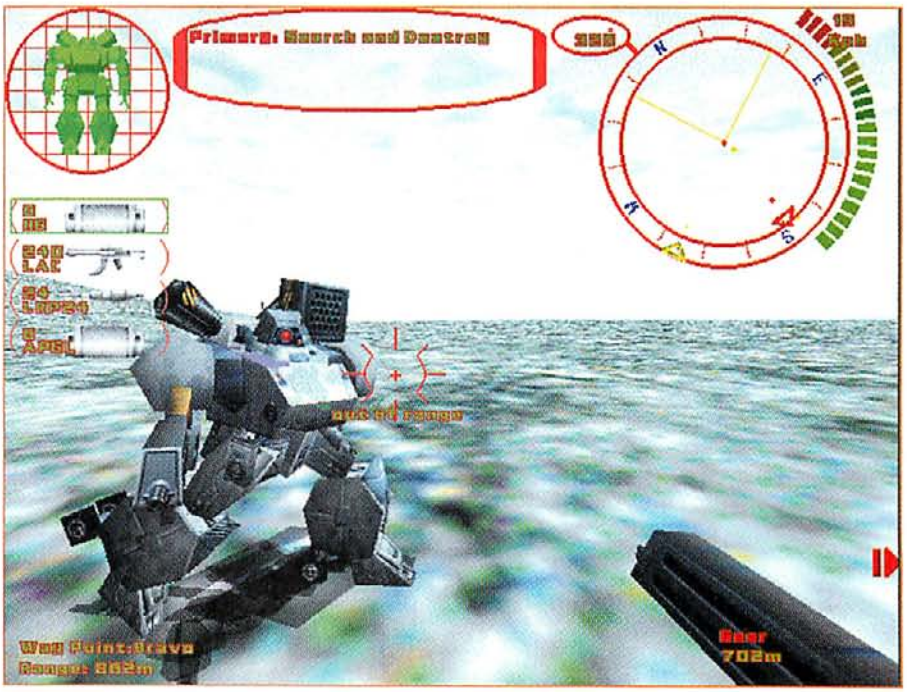
INSTANT ANNOYANCE

The first thing I wanted to do after getting the game booted up was jump into an Instant Action scenario and get a feel for the AI and engine. I checked the main menu, and figuring that I was just being blind, proceeded to check the manual. Sure enough, there is no Instant Action mode! MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES remains on my hard drive after all this time because I can jump into a random mission with random enemies and mix it up. After you've finished the campaigns in HEAVY GEAR, you've got two choices. Play them again or go find a lag-laden online game. The decision not to include a mission editor or random mission generator is a serious blow to the replay value of this product.

After configuring my control setup, I went to adjust the graphics and see how the game engine looked. I changed to the software-only mode, and I have this recommendation: If you do not own a 3D accelerator card, don't buy this game. The software 640x480 mode is not pretty, and it has a terrible frame rate. The textures look pretty bad, and if you turn them off, enemy Gears can be nearly invisible. The game won't even look as good as MECHWARRIOR 2. As bad as this sounds, it's a masterpiece compared to 320x200, the recommended mode for Pentium 150 or slower machines. There, I can't even read the names of the weapons in the HUD, and the other Gears just look like strange blobs. In fact, I once mistook a rock for a gear in this mode and emptied several rounds of ammo into it before



PRETTY, JERKY Running this level of detail without 3D acceleration results in jerky frame rates and heavily dithered textures.



DETAIL ORIENTED The graphics look fantastic on 3D card-equipped systems, but they slow down when the shooting starts.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90 (320x200, no textures; P166 minimum for 640x480), Windows 95, 16MB RAM (24MB for multiplayer); SVGA graphics, 4x CD-ROM, sound card, mouse.
3D Support: 3Dfx, Rendition, Direct3D.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, direct cable, LAN (2-8 players), Internet (2-8 players); 1 CD per player.
Original Design: Dream Pod 9
Designer: Dustin Browder
Publisher: Activision
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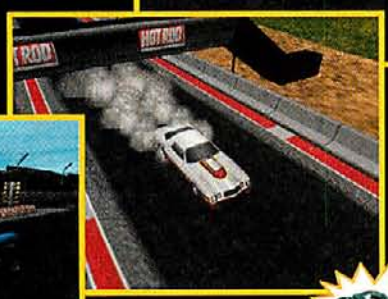
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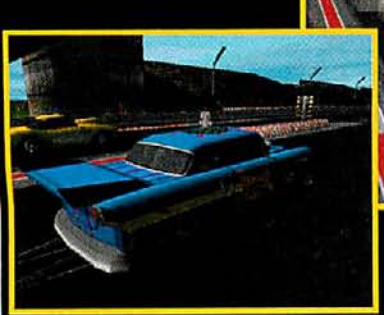
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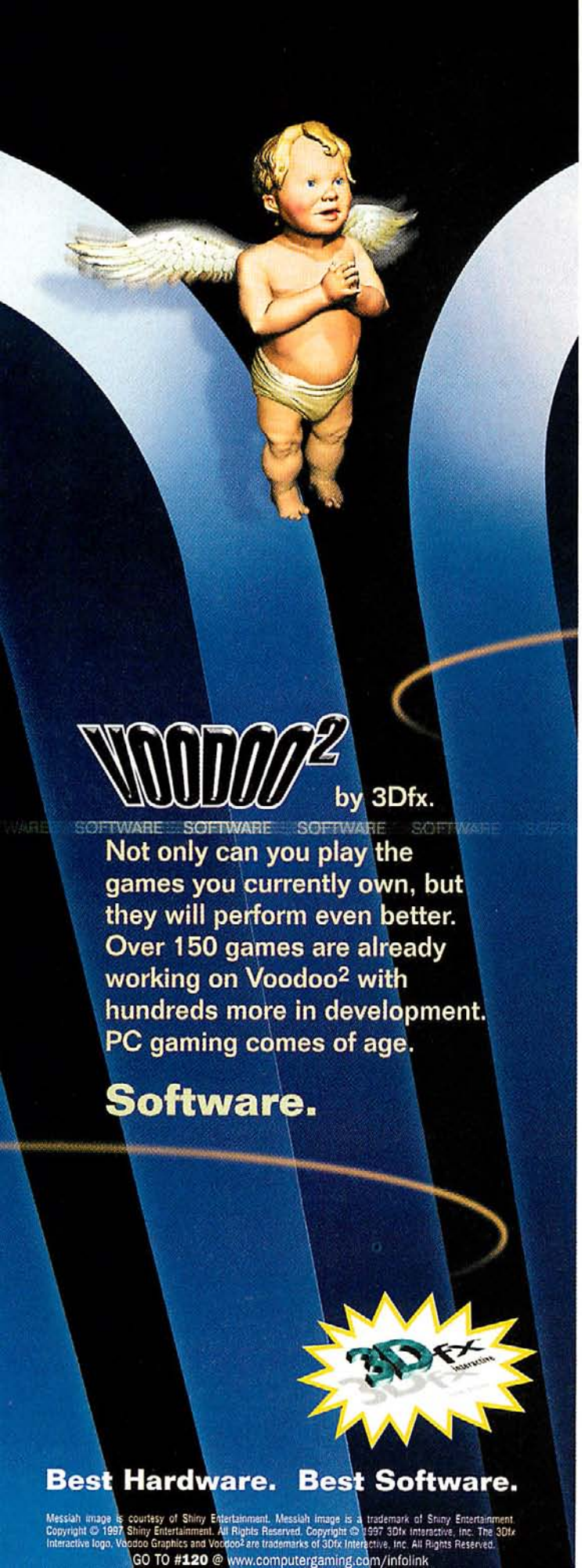
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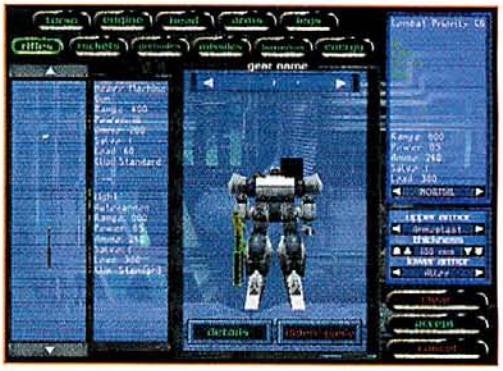
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closing to point blank range and seeing (sort of) the rock for what it was.

I quickly moved on to the 3D modes, checking the 3Dfx mode first. HEAVY GEAR looks considerably better with a 3D card, but there were several really obvious problems. The textures just don't look quite right. Other problems aren't quite so subtle, such as the dust from your wheels as you roll across dry land. In an age where many 3D sims have wispy, semitranslucent smoke and clouds, the dust here appears in the form of big square black pixels rising from the ground, as does smoke from another damaged gear.

To top things off, while the frame rate can be quite smooth when you're traversing terrain, the action gets jumpy and starts stuttering as soon as other Gears appear on the battlefield and start firing. The frame-rate problems make control difficult enough that I end up playing the game in low light (wire frame) mode, as the textures and visual effects aren't worth the hit to playability. My guess is that the designers didn't have time to optimize the graphic effects and performance, because I can't imagine anyone designing them that way intentionally.



MESHING GEARS The drag-and-drop interface for customizing your Gear is a welcome improvement from the MECHWARRIOR series.

IN THE COCKPIT

The Gear design section is well done, with drag-and-drop components and a simple interface. The Gear components can be customized as well, allowing you to decide on details, such as whether to use light or standard actuators in the knees of your gear. You drop weapons into place by dragging them to an available mounting point. I was surprised that you can't hold a second rifle in the left hand, which is reserved for grenade use only. A second autocannon in that hand would have been much more useful than those grenades ever were.

There are two mission types available: Story and Tour of Duty. Story is a scripted campaign mode with a predetermined story line. Here, you're an elite pilot for the Northern Guard. If you want a little more control over your destiny, you can choose the Tour of Duty, which allows you to pick your allegiance and

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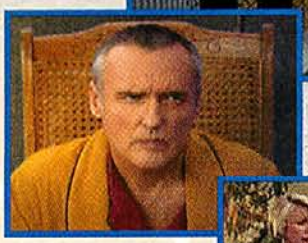














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Black Dahlia

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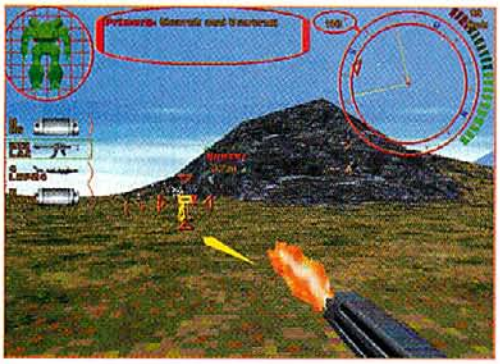
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Sharing the Pain

The same problems that plague the single player game make the multiplayer aspects, er, challenging as well. There are a wealth of connection options, and the development team has admirably supported multiplayer campaigns instead of simpler deathmatch options. Unfortunately, the performance and graphics problems are compounded by the additional processing time needed to stay connected and in sync. (Activision's HEAVY GEAR FAQ on its Web site admits that the multiplayer features are still at the beta level.) While Internet play supports up to eight players, you'll be limited to four if any players are using modems rather than T1 lines. Most of the comments I've heard about multiplayer HEAVY GEAR have been negative, and my own experiences have been underwhelming as well. Many players who play regularly say it is fun only if you tolerate the engine problems. Some games are saved by their multiplayer value, but here the single-player problems hamper multiplayer as well.

your battles. Your victories in this mode actually influence the course of the battle, and you'll see the front lines move back and forth, depending on how well you do. Your supplies, reinforcements, and mission types also depend on your skill in the Gears. There are a variety of mission types and objectives, but they don't feel very different from one another.



SIDE SHOOTER With articulated guns and hips, why do many shots have to veer off to the side upon exiting the gun barrel?

The AI is very good, but inconsistent. There are times when the enemy will hide behind rocks and duck behind cover. There are also times when an enemy Gear will stand there and take fire for several seconds before reacting to it. The biggest problem is that with five or six Gears on the field the frame rate drops a lot, and you can almost hear anything less than a Pentium II scream in pain when this happens.

MECH IT STOP!

The most disappointing thing about this game is that you see lots of parts of the game that really do show care and creativity. I don't know what caused Activision to stop the team short of completion, but whatever the reason, it robbed them of producing a hit and us of getting a great game. HEAVY GEAR just doesn't look like a finished product. I'd love to see a fully cooked version of this game, because parts of it show great potential. But as it stands, it's still a bit too chewy to enjoy.

APPEAL: Die-hard giant robot game fans who really, really need a new fix.

PROS: Nicely done dynamic campaign; good gear design lab; some original gameplay.

CONS: Game engine slows easily; visually looks unfinished; unacceptable frame rate; inconsistent artificial intelligence.

CG RATED

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F22 ADF - DID	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
iF22 - iMagic	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
F22 Raptor - NovaLogic	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
JFIII - Eidos	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO



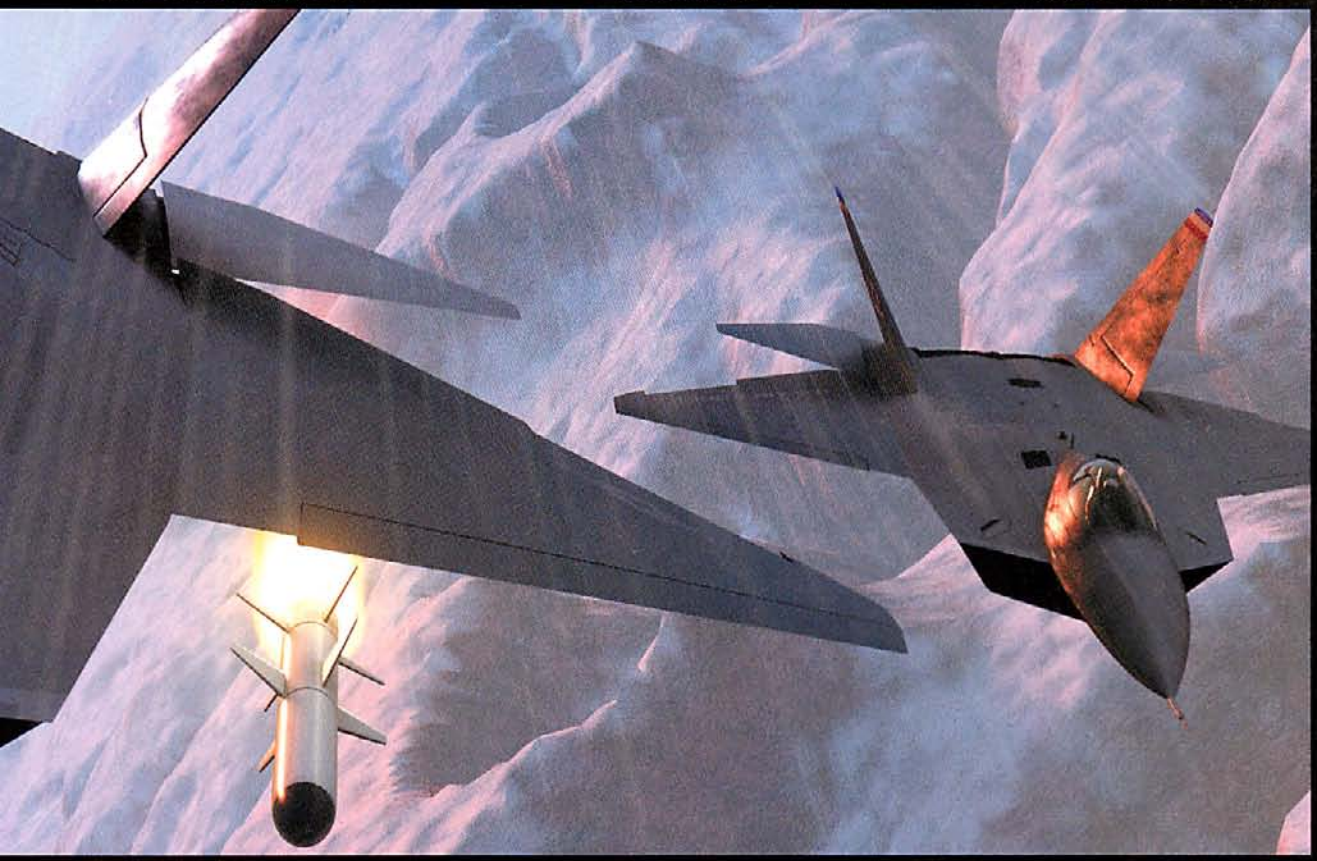
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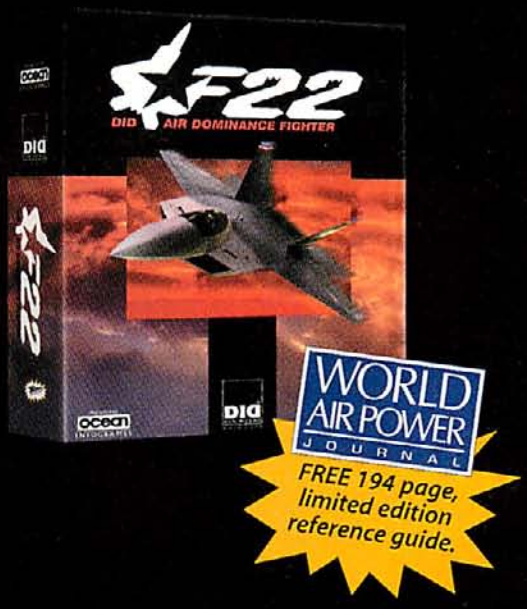
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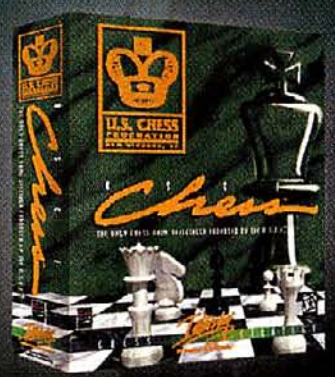
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Fit for a King



Interactive Magic's Complex Game of Strategy Will Reward You With Deep Gameplay

by Elliott Chin

With so many good games to choose from, real-time gamers are in heaven these days. DARK REIGN, MYTH, AGE OF EMPIRES, TOTAL ANNIHILATION—these are the cream of the crop, and STARCRAFT and POPULOUS are just around the corner. There are other lesser-known RTS games, though, that are worthy of gamers' attention: Diamonds in the rough, so to speak, that will reward the patient gamer. Interactive Magic's SEVEN KINGDOMS, developed by Trevor Chan and Enlight Studios, is such a game. Like Chan's CAPITALISM, SEVEN KINGDOMS is deep, complex, and challenging. While it also shares CAPITALISM's steep learning curve, it goes beyond Chan's first effort by being more fun and personable.

HISTORY 101

Unlike the raft of sci-fi real-time games, SEVEN KINGDOMS is a semi-historical strategy game in a vein similar to AGE OF EMPIRES. You can control one of seven different cultures—Chinese, Greek, Japanese, Mayan, Norman, Norse, or Persian—in an open-ended attempt to grow your empire by winning over independent villages and dominating your neighbors. You start out as a small village of your initial nationality, but can assimilate other cultures by conquest or by persuasion.

When you first boot up SEVEN KINGDOMS, you'll see that there is no campaign game and no scenario editor, both staples of real-time strategy games. Story-driven campaigns give us a variety of linked challenges, allow us to feel a sense of accomplishment after each scenario, and provide an impetus to keep playing the game. SEVEN KINGDOMS' lack of a campaign shortchanges gamers on gameplay. The same can be said for its lack of a scenario editor.

What you do get is a game similar to CIVILIZATION. You start out as one puny town and then attempt to create a vast empire. If you grow so large that you can crush your rivals and eliminate all other kingdoms, you win the game. That's it. In many other strategy games, including AGE OF EMPIRES, this wouldn't offer nearly enough gameplay. However, SEVEN KINGDOMS gets away with it (barely) because of its incredible depth and complexity. It also does *not* emphasize combat. Many other real-time games, because they are all about building up troops and smashing the enemy, would be terrible as open-ended single-scenario games. But in SEVEN KINGDOMS, there is so much to do that an open-ended game could last for hours.

Even despite the wealth of game options (such as world sizes, victory conditions, and random events), which serve to increase the replayability of SEVEN KINGDOMS, the lack of a campaign is a disappointment.

However, in addition to the single scenario game, there is multiplayer support, a tutorial, and scenarios. The scenarios liven up the package by providing your missions with specific conditions and goals, time limits, and varying difficulty levels. The tutorial is good, and completely necessary for a game with this level of complexity. It walks you through combat, trade, mining and manufacturing, and espionage. The tutorial also covers the assimilation of independent villages, the



IN TOO DEEP SEVEN KINGDOMS is a complex strategy game. You'll need to pay close attention to diplomacy, espionage, economy, and population management.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 45MB hard-drive space, SVGA graphics, 4x CD-ROM drive, 100 percent Sound-Blaster–compatible sound card.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Null modem, modem (2 players), LAN, Internet (2–7 players); 1 CD per every 4 players.
Designer: Trevor Chan and Enlight Studios
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Research Triangle Park, NC
(919) 461-0722
www.imagicgames.com

taking on of foreign kingdoms, and the tackling of the monster lairs in various locations around the map.

SO HOW DEEP IS IT?

Unlike many other real-time games, you don't create units. You start with one town and a population. People are your most valuable resource in this game, but you don't directly increase their numbers. Instead, you indirectly increase population by carefully managing your empire and building a robust standard of living.

You can recruit common workers and soldiers or train specialists from your town's population. Specialists are important for the six aspects of empire management in the game: construction, leadership, mining, manufacturing, research, and espionage.

With construction workers, you build mines to extract resources, factories to turn the raw materials into finished goods, markets to sell either raw or finished goods, forts to house and train troops, towers of science to research weapons, and war factories to build siege weapons. The factories, mines, and towers require workers to operate. If you build these buildings close to a village, then villagers will automatically move into the buildings to work. If you build the structures far from towns, then you need to settle a new village near your work sites.

Economics is a little more complicated. As with the rest of the game, it relies on some serious interdependencies. In order to get money, which is necessary for all your empire's needs, you need to mine raw materials. You can sell these raw materials at markets or refine them in factories to make finished products. These products can also be sold for cash. You can sell either of these goods in foreign lands, but you must build your own market linked to foreign towns. However, as with all aspects of this game, there are additional considerations. To get these raw or finished goods to foreign markets (or to move raw materials between unlinked mines and factories or markets), you need to build caravans.



CAPITALISM REDUX The economic model is very robust in SEVEN KINGDOMS. You'll need to mine raw materials, refine them, and sell the finished goods to domestic and foreign markets.

Yes, it's complex, but the bad news is, this is only a simplified overview. However, I like the economic model. It's much deeper than the abstracted economics of AGE and CIV.

Espionage is equally sophisticated, and is much better realized here than in many other strategy games. You can train spies to infiltrate enemy cities to check up on your rivals or conduct occasional assassinations and city subversions. You can even worm your spies into enemy confidence; if they happen to be promoted to general status, you could even take control of enemy cities and armies.

I was also impressed by the game's diplomacy. All kingdoms have a reputation score, which is affected by their deeds versus their citizens and other kingdoms. The diplomacy options are very robust. You can enter into trade, friendly, or alliance treaties; declare war on enemy kingdoms; demand or pay tribute; and unify disparate states by purchasing a rival king's crown. The best thing about this diplomacy model is that it works. The AI doesn't reject treaties out of hand. They will even take the initiative to ally with you or to open trade dialogue.



ITS NOT ALL ABOUT ARMS Combat is necessary for eventual subjugation of enemy kingdoms, but you need to weaken your enemies first through effective use of diplomacy and espionage.

IT DOESN'T STOP

There are even more aspects of the gameplay to digest. For one, getting independent villages to join you is dependent upon their nationality, your king's nationality, your reputation, and the standard of living you promise them (measured by the goods you can sell them at market). Obviously, people are more likely to join rulers who are like themselves. However, you can force villages into submission through strength of arms or grants of money. Once you gain a village's loyalty, though, you'll have to keep it by giving yet more grants and ensuring that the villagers are employed and happy.

There is even a fantasy aspect to the game, as monster lairs dot the landscape. If you can defeat the enemies within, you gain treasure and scrolls of power. There are seven scrolls, one for each nationality, which are used to build Seats of Power. By getting each nationality to pray at its Seat of Power, you can summon that nationality's god—a superpowerful unit that can confer some impressive bonuses on your kingdom.

You'll stumble several times before you can learn to walk in this game. You could also learn a thing or two from the AI. It is fairly smart, and quite clever with its use of spies. However, I did notice that early in the game it proved susceptible to "grunt rushes."

FALL OF THE EMPIRE

While SEVEN KINGDOMS is wonderfully deep, it does suffer some minor problems. The biggest of those is its interface. Although you can get brief help after you hold your cursor over an item for several seconds, the icons and information setup aren't intuitive (many icons look alike, and some don't exactly illustrate the command). I'm a big fan of instant text explanation, such as what

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—Ultra Game Players

4 out of 5 stars "It warps past any other Star Trek game"
—GamerzEdge

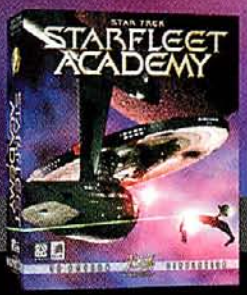


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you see in AGE OF EMPIRES or WARCRAFT II. Move your cursor over the barracks icon, and you'll see a line of text at the bottom information bar that says "Barracks." That's all I ask for: just a little one- or two-word description of what I'm clicking on.

The complexity of the game, combined with the cumbersome interface, also makes this game seem very unwieldy at times. While careful study of the manual and tutorial will minimize this feeling, some aspects of the game—such as the nuances of caravans that move from mine to factory to foreign market—can take several games to learn. I don't think difficulty is a bad thing for strategy games, but SEVEN KINGDOMS has a steeper learning curve than many 4x turn-based games.



DIFFERENT STROKES The fact that each nationality has its own look is a great touch. Each civilization even speaks a little in its native tongue.

My other gripes with the game come during gameplay. Because units tend to bunch up when attacking, it's hard to select individual units from a mob. It also bothered me that there was no easy way to tell which ruler owned a certain village. Many times, I'd accept a trade treaty with a foreign ruler and then be unable to find his city. I could clearly see a city's name, but not its ruler (colors did help, but including ruler initials would have been better).

I also would have liked the game more if there were greater unit variety. A cavalry unit would have added more tactical depth to SEVEN KINGDOMS, especially since you eventually will engage in combat.

Although I've tried to capture SEVEN KINGDOMS as best I could in this review, I've only scratched the surface of the game. I haven't seen a game this complex in a long time. That's a good thing, especially when you consider that this is a real-time game. SEVEN KINGDOMS isn't for everyone, but if you enjoy deep strategy, I recommend you boot this game up yourself, and see just how much it has to offer.

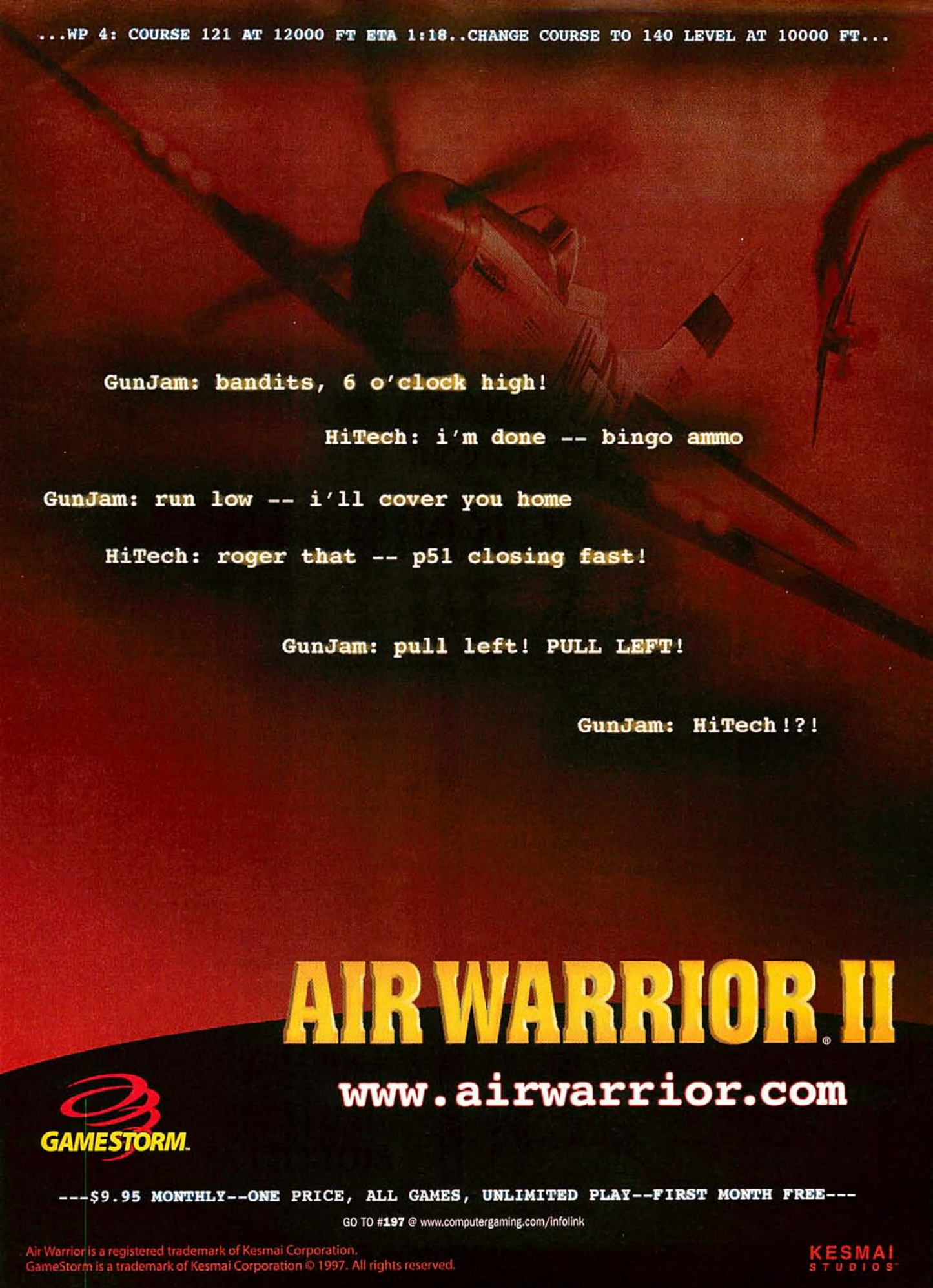
APPEAL: Strategy gamers looking for a deep, sophisticated real-time game.

PROS: Excellent tutorial; lots of depth; plenty to do; cool fantasy and multicultural aspects.

CONS: No campaign play; lack of a scenario editor; unintuitive interface; game is too short.

CG RATED




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Living & Dying In 40K Time

Finally, a Real Warhammer *for the Computer*

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

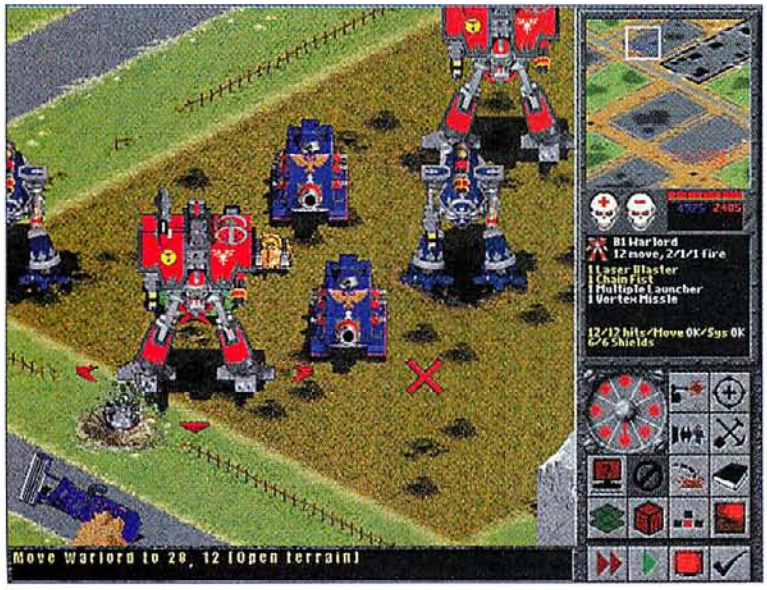
by Tim Carter

Amid the avalanche of real-time clones that seem to have buried the tactical computer strategy game market, it's good to see a product that returns to where the genre began—namely, computerized versions of traditional games that are, by definition, turn-based. WARHAMMER EPIC 40,000: FINAL LIBERATION is the latest computer version of the classic tabletop miniatures game. As such, it enters the market with a lengthy background and history that newcomers may find somewhat intimidating. After all, if you're playing a WWII tactical game, the odds are that you already know what a Tiger tank is and you have some idea of how to use it against those pesky Shermans. But when you're first confronted with a horde of Ork Boyz, you may have to step back for a moment, reassure yourself that you haven't purchased a rap opera of *The Lord of the Rings*, and then delve into WARHAMMER's online encyclopedia to sort things out.

ORK BOYZ IN DA HOOD

If you're a dyed-in-the-wool *Warhammer* fan, you'll be in heaven from the start. If you're new, don't despair; WARHAMMER 40K sports an easy-to-learn tactical interface. WARHAMMER is essentially a tactical wargame, in which you control platoons and squads à la STEEL PANTHERS, albeit in a futuristic sci-fi environment. While you can create random "quick battles," the meat of the game lies in a sequential campaign of scenarios controlled through a strategic map. Between battles, you may decide where to attack next, or, at higher levels of difficulty, respond to enemy counterattacks.

The interface for WARHAMMER 40K is highly derivative of earlier successful SSI games. The majority of your screen is taken up by a tactical map, while the right-hand side contains control buttons and a overview of the strategic map. Many of the commands and design elements are highly derivative of other tactical games, as WARHAMMER depends largely on its science-fiction universe for originality. This is by no means a bad thing; I found that the game's greatest strength was its simplicity, and the freedom this gave me to play around with the multitude of original units and unit combinations. As with all good tactical games, combined operations is a key to victory. Depending on the race you are playing, you will have to deal with radically different unit mixes that will greatly affect your strategy once the battle is joined.



TECH TOYS IN A SANDBOX *Warhammer* tabletop miniatures come to life on your computer—if you can ignore the dull background graphics.

AS UNSIGHTLY AS ORKISH MUGS

Having said this, be warned that on a purely visual level, WARHAMMER 40K is perhaps the ugliest game I have seen in ages. I have always been an advocate of strong gameplay over flashy graphics and design, yet I can't help feeling that a better color palette and more crisp graphics in the tactical battle screen would have helped this game a lot.

This is all the more surprising because once you enter the codex (WARHAMMER's online reference guide), the background images are quite attractive. However, the text that scrolls over these background images to provide you with hard



Price: $49.99
System Requirements: Pentium 90 (P120 recommended), 16MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM (4x recommended), SVGA graphics, mouse; supports Win 95-compatible sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: LAN (2–4 players), TCP/IP (2–4 players), Hotseat (2–4 players), Modem/Serial (2 players); 1 CD per player.
Designer: Holistic
Publisher: SSI
Sunnyvale, CA
(800) 601-7529
www.ssionline.com

information is blocky, hard to read, and generally ugly.

To my mind, ugliness is no reason not to buy a game, and I'm quite certain that the market has already seen far too many attractive, yet mindless, games. But, unless you have an Orkish appreciation of art, you will probably find combat to be blocky and a tad dark. Once the battle begins, however, you should soon find yourself enjoying the challenge enough to overcome the visual mess.

WARHAMMER gives classic boardgame fans all of the aspects of turn-based combat that are so difficult to manage on a tabletop. Reconnaissance and line-of-sight are crucial, as ambushes are frequent and generally costly. Supporting artillery is handled quite well, particularly when it comes to defensive opportunity fire during the enemy's turn. The WARHAMMER battlefield is a hostile and unforgiving place. While your massive Titan AFVs might be able to rumble straight into the heart of the enemy's defenses without risk of immediate death (at least for a while), most of your other forces will have to be very careful in how they move and use cover if they are to succeed. In particular, it doesn't pay to be cavalier with your infantry, and the game does a good job of creating a sense of loss when one of your infantrymen screams and goes down.



BAD MOON RISING Here's a good view of the scale in WARHAMMER 40K; The diminutive Bad Moon Boyz (left) charge like a wave of ants against a group of Siege Artillery.

WARHAMMER 40K excels at forcing you to trade off between speed and risk, and also to make the complementary trade between moving weak units on their own or loading them into armored carriers (and so risking a true catastrophe if the carrier is hit).

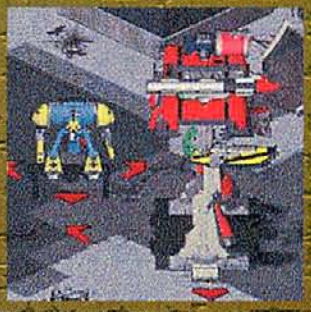
Personally, I have always thought that tactical wargames are, by definition, somewhat limited in their scope. The game designers must always strive to add as many variables as possible to compensate for the lack of big decision-making power that can lead to repetitious play. The depth of the WARHAMMER universe helps out a lot in this respect, as the range of weapons, enemies, and allies—along with terrain and diverse scenarios—gives you a pretty decent mix of toys to play with and different places in which to play. Other than better graphics, what more could you ask for?

A CAST OF 40,000

The WARHAMMER universe is both weird and wonderful. Yes, it *is* another fantasy environment populated by Orks, but the mechanical hodgepodge of the (apparently) warmongering green rabble has an appeal clearly distinct from its Tolkienesque predecessors. To aid the non-*Warhammer* gamers in getting a feel for the environment, I have summarized the basic combatants below. Fanatic *Warhammer* fans will no doubt spot the analysis of a newcomer, and I hasten to add that these observations come from the computer game only.

HUMANITY

The good guys, as usual, are human. Perhaps based on our history of warfare on Earth, the human army tends to look and feel much like an advanced version of the armies that currently roam the planet. Your infantry is good, but somewhat vulnerable to fire; your tanks are unparalleled; and you tend to have decent artillery and air support. Air strikes, by the way, can be called in from off the map but are not directly controlled by the player. Your helicopter-type units provide closer support and offer both the benefits of helicopters (loads of mobile firepower) and their drawbacks (vulnerability). Anyone schooled in the U.S. concept of Air/Land Battle (as seen through a variety of other SSI games, most notably STEEL PANTHERS 3), should do well.



THE ORKISH HORDES

A bizarre mishmash of units that vary by Ork clan and sound like a cross between gangsta rap and Dr. Seuss. Gamers looking for a completely different challenge can take up the Orkish banner and charge headlong at the better organized and maintained imperial forces with a wild assortment of light, mobile units backed by very dangerous infantry. My favorites include the Bowelburna and the Gobsmasha, both designated as "high-speed assault battle buggys." If battle-buggys battle beetles in a bottle... Never mind.



APPEAL: For fans of *Warhammer* or anyone who wants a good tactical game.

PROS: Simple and challenging; it really is *Warhammer.*

CONS: Ugly background art.

CG RATED ★★★★

"Forget every prejudice you may have against real-time games."

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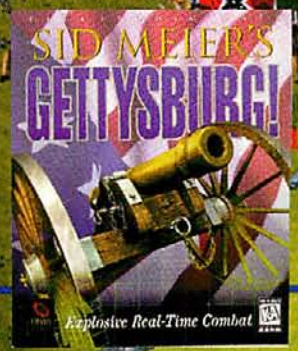
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"It's great, maybe the best AI I've ever played against."
"HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION."
GAMESFIRST 95% Rating

"...historical and fun...superb battlefield feel...excellent sound and graphics..."
CGW ★★★★½

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GAMESPOT 9.3 Rating
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PC GAMER
Editor's Choice



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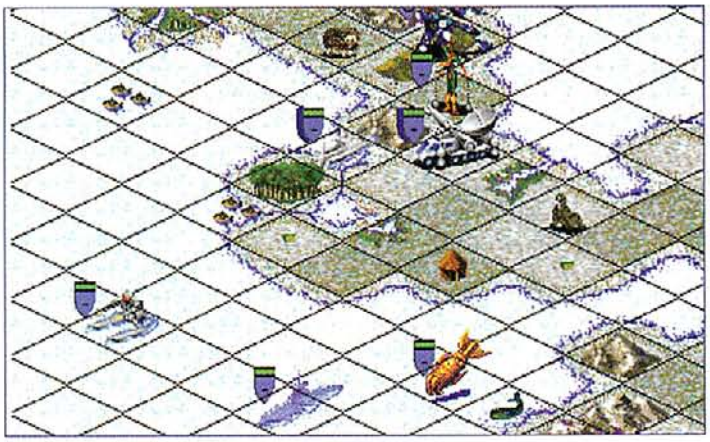
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New Civilizations

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

New Scenarios and an Enhanced Designer for a Classic Game

by Mike Fay



FIRE AND ICE Scenarios run the gamut from fantasy/magic to sci-fi to whimsy.

MicroProse has breathed more life into one of the most celebrated strategy games, SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II. The CIV II: FANTASTIC WORLDS expansion set (MicroProse no longer has the rights to the word "Civilization") offers 19 diverse fantasy and sci-fi scenarios, and a greatly enhanced toolkit for making your own worlds. Some of the scenarios are so unusual that they give CIV II a whole new feel.

SPACESHIPS AND SORCERY

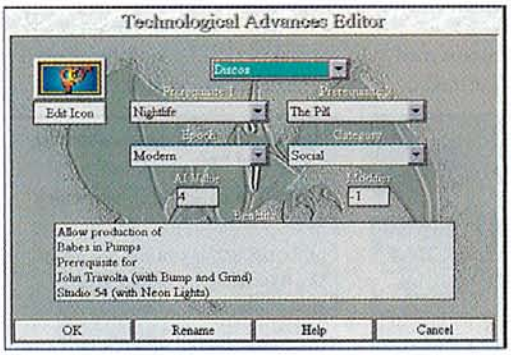
The set includes 11 new MicroProse scenarios and 8 "Best of the Net" scenarios, culled from the dozens available on the Internet. While the CIV II engine is used, many game aspects are changed, including unit properties, graphics, sounds, the research tree, and even terrain graphics and functionality. The results are rich and novel. The Jules Verne retro sci-fi scenario has quaint Victorian-era units and wacky discoveries from an age when exploration, intellect, and science could tame the great unknown. Contrast that to the X-COM scenario, which has almost no research or production—just a battalion of marines plunked down on Mars to exterminate an alien infestation. A number of the scenarios start with plenty of technology already researched and many units already placed. MicroProse put a lot of work into its Midgard fantasy scenario, as well as its MASTER OF ORION and MASTER OF MAGIC ones. Other scenarios feature dinosaurs, a medieval Japan setting, American Indian tribes, a battle of the sexes, an interesting microbiology setting with "cultural" advancements like cilia, and even an alternate world populated by teddy bears.

EXPANDED TOOLKIT

If you're not into fantasy or sci-fi, you might still want the enhanced scenario toolkit. It covers lots of ground: universal effects, event triggers, city improvements, tech advances, terrain properties (yes!), and tribe properties. You can easily edit unit properties and individual unit sounds via menus. And graphics can be edited easily for units, city improvements, tech advances, terrain, and cities. There are slots for 8 new units and up to 100 tech advances. The macro language has been expanded, with better handles on detecting who did what to whom, and the CIV II: FW menu-driven events editor now has 10 triggers and 11 actions. Scenarios designed by users prior to CIV II: FW will work, although they might require minor modifications.

The improved toolkit is not perfect. The effects of Wonders of the World still can't be changed (although they can be renamed and reassigned). Some of the text and help displays in modified scenarios look unpolished, and not all graphics can be changed. Don't be surprised if the steamy Egyptian messenger hails you on the frigid plains of an icy planet.

CIV II: FANTASTIC WORLDS is the obvious next advance for anybody who wants to be more "civilized." If you like sci-fi or fantasy scenarios, or you want to edit new worlds, this is a must-have expansion pack.



BUILD YOUR OWN WORLD Tired of the same old 4x game? Dance to your own tune with the enhanced toolkit.

APPEAL: Civ II fans; turn-based strategy gamers with a taste for fantasy or sci-fi.

PROS: Rich fantasy/sci-fi scenarios; major design-kit enhancement.

CONS: Still Civ II at its core; toolkit not completely comprehensive.

CG RATED ★★★★



Price: $29.99
System Requirements: 486/33, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, 8MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, Windows-compatible mouse and sound card, SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
Alameda, CA
(510) 864-4550
www.microprose.com

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Yesterday's News

Interplay Delivers Too Little, Too Late



BEEN THERE, DONE THAT EARTH 2140 is a good-looking 1996 game, but today, it just seems to be a competent RED ALERT clone.

by Martin E. Cirulis

You know you're in trouble with today's high-expectation consumers when the biggest brag on your box is "Stunning 16-bit color graphics." The problem is even worse when your game is a COMMAND & CONQUER clone and you're trying to sell it on those crowded Christmas shelves. This is the unfortunate situation facing Interplay's EARTH 2140. And while it turns out there is more to this game than nice graphics, the ugly truth is that the real-time world passed this title by before it even got out of its development cycle.



Price: $39.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95 or DOS 6.x, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space, 1MB SVGA-graphics card, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports most major sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: LAN (2–6 players); 1 CD per player.
Designer: TopWare
Publisher: Interplay
Irvine, CA
(714) 553-6655
www.interplay.com

SAME AS IT EVER WAS

The biggest hurdle EARTH 2140 faces is how to get gamers to want to play yet another version of C&C—though to be fair, we are looking at a RED ALERT–era clone here. Earth is a ravaged wasteland with only two great powers left: The Eurasian Dynasty and the Union of Civilized States. Neither has anything better to do than argue about how to further rape what is left of the planet's resources. I suppose you could consider this slightly illogical setup a glimpse into a nonenvironmental future.

From here it's the same old build, mine, and demolish gameplay. There's the usual mix of open-ended base-building scenarios sprinkled with quest missions, as well as two campaigns with bare-bones stories. However, the scenarios and maps themselves are small and tedious, instead of wide-open and involving. If all of this seems novel to you, let me be the first to welcome you to our planet.

The units themselves are varied and interesting, with the UCS concentrating on 'mech-type units and the ED sticking mainly to good old-fashioned tanks. The developers have also done some good things with the basic combat model, making buildings vulnerable to enemy occupation, for example. This means you have to consider garrisoning troops *inside* vital structures, as well as outside. Units in EARTH 2140 are also more inclined to roam than their counterparts in other games, and this is both good and bad. Since fire is an important combat effect, it's nice to see units smart enough to get away from spreading flames. (Though it might have been nice to see a movement AI smart enough to drive around an already burning square in a unit's path.)



OLD-SCHOOL PLAY Scenario design in EARTH 2140 seems tedious and too limited.

The downside is that even if you set your units to a purely defensive posture, they tend to wander about. You end up spending a lot of effort herding units back into the defensive positions you set for them. Another glitch is that your units will kindly move out of the way to let an enemy unit past.

HISTORY LESSON

There are interesting touches sprinkled throughout EARTH 2140, but the sad truth is this: There just isn't enough originality here to raise this title above mediocrity. The standards of real-time gaming set by such games as DARK REIGN and TOTAL ANNIHILATION have left a game like this behind. These days, you can get away with lacking 3D terrain *or* a construction kit—but not both.

If EARTH 2140 had been released before RED ALERT, it would have been revolutionary. But today, it seems only like a well-done clone bound to be lost amid the horde of C&C copycats.

APPEAL: New players who have yet to play C&C.

PROS: Nice graphics; interesting units; adequate AI.

CONS: Nothing to raise it above the level of last year's C&C clones; weak scenarios and maps; some questionable pathfinding.

CG RATED ★★☆



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CREATIVE

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

The Great Bland Menace

Clancy's Strategy Debut Is Long on Boredom and Short on Gameplay

by Martin E. Cirulis

Two things are apparent after your first hour of playing POLITIKA. The first is that Tom Clancy is really into himself, and the second is that there are countless other boardgames more worthy of being ported to the PC. What we have here is a competent, yet uninspired, wargame that ranks somewhere between *Risk* and *Axis and Allies* in terms of complexity, but far below either when it comes to playability.



OLD GUARD The gameplay in POLITIKA is bone-dry. The pacing is also excruciatingly slow, in single- and multiplayer games.

THE TOM SHOW

The first hurdle in this game is getting past the 4,732 uses of Tom Clancy's name, the paperback novel by the techno-thriller master himself, and the 15 minutes of fake news footage featuring Clancy muttering about Russian power-play politics following Boris Yeltsin's death. Should you survive this last ordeal, you find yourself facing a nice map of Russia divided into a bunch of provinces tagged with colored markers representing the influence of the eight factions struggling for control.

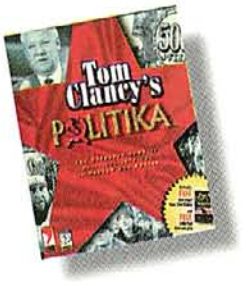
You begin play by placing your two representatives (cute little *Monopoly*-style icons) on the board. These represent the focus of your political interest. The basic point of the game is to be the one with the most markers and money at the end of a preset number of turns. You gain markers by "attacking" your opponents' colors through a process of "buying" dice with cash or cards, and then rolling those dice. Roll high and the targeted opponent's marker turns to your color. If your victim rolls higher, nothing happens except you're out some money and cards.

That's pretty much as exciting as it gets. Each faction has a special ability, such as getting more money or stealing cards, which helps to spice things up. Special event cards—a crude simulation of random, realistic, and sometimes tumultuous events—also keep things from being too straightforward. Unfortunately, in terms of gameplay, there's not a whole lot more here. For *Diplomacy* fans, this can be a fun game of wheeling and dealing over single victory points. Anyone else should avoid this coup.

DON'T PLAY IT AGAIN

POLITIKA may be one of those rare cases in which the board version actually plays faster than the computer game. It makes ADVANCED CIVILIZATION look like a click-fest. I thought for a while that this was only a side effect of playing an obviously social game in single-player mode. When I signed onto the free RedStorm server, though, I discovered that multiplayer mode was even more tedious.

While the Internet play was definitely designed to be an organic component of the game (rather than a tacked-on afterthought), it's unfortunate that the source material is so dry. There are much better games available that cover much the same territory, and the monotony is only compounded by some bad choices in execution. If the presentation were slicker and smoother, if the game were filled with Russian multimedia treats, and if the computer players were given more personality, this game could have been average. But apart from a few cute animated icons, POLITIKA is utterly devoid of the character it so desperately needs.



Price: $49.99
System Requirements: Pentium 100 (133 recommended), 16MB RAM, 20MB hard-drive space, Windows 95, 256-color SVGA mode, Sound Blaster 16-compatible sound card.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Modem (2 players), LAN, Internet (2–8 players); 1 CD per player.
Designer: Red Storm Entertainment
Publisher: Mindscape
Novato, CA
(415) 897-9900
www.mindscape.com

APPEAL: ***Diplomacy*** **fans itching for a computer game; rabid Tom Clancy readers.**

PROS: **Free novel; some shades of intriguing wheeling and dealing gameplay.**

CONS: **Too much introductory fluff before the game; unexciting gameplay; yawningly slow pace.**

CG RATED

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Newsweek, April '97

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★★★★★ **REVIEW • CART PRECISION RACING**

CG CHOICE

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Full Throttle

CART Precision Racing Is One of the Best Auto-Racing Sims Ever

by Scott A. May

Microsoft's commitment to Windows 95 games may be genuine, but so far, other than AGE OF EMPIRES, the publisher hasn't produced much to brag about. This all changes with the release of CART PRECISION RACING, an Indy Car simulator unlike anything else you've ever seen or played. The folks at Papyrus (INDYCAR RACING II) and Psygnosis (FORMULA 1) have reason to be worried, because CART is nothing short of brilliant.

The game authentically simulates the 1997 PPC CART World Series schedule, encompassing a grueling 17-track tour of the best courses available. The tracks include dedicated ovals (Michigan, Fontana, Milwaukee, and Miami), elaborate temporary street courses (Queensland, Detroit, and Vancouver), and beautifully landscaped permanent road tracks (Laguna Seca, Portland, and Elkhart Lake). A full roster of 1997 PPC racing teams is also represented, featuring 17 teams and 26 drivers, complete with career stats, highlights, and biographies of each driver.

Race types include Single Race Weekend—a six-step series of practice and qualifying rounds that leads to a Sunday race—Full Race Season, Test Drive, and Quick Race. Intimidated by the track selection? Study the Track Info, an overhead diagram marked with grid positions, gearing, passing, and caution zones. Click Track Tour for a cockpit-mounted full-motion video tour of the actual course in action.

AUTO SHOP

Before you punch the ignition button, take time to visit the Garage, one of the most outstanding features in a game filled with pleasures. No other racing sim comes close to matching CART's fully stocked tune-up shop. Here you can plan pit strategies, adjust aerodynamics (Gurney flaps and wing angles), drive lines, tires (compound, pressure, and stagger), and suspension (axle, corner, and damping), among many others. All vehicles enter the garage using preset default values for each track. You can then make adjustments, take a quick test drive, and return to the garage for fine-tuning. A Virtual Mechanic, featuring advice by real-life CART engineer Nigel Benett, can analyze your settings and make necessary recommendations.

Multiplayer options include up to four players battling head-to-head on the Internet—via Microsoft's free online gaming service, The Zone—or up to eight players connected to a LAN. Unfortunately, as of this writing, the game was so new that finding available online competition proved impossible, so this aspect remains untested.

CART's on-track graphics are superb. This is—without a doubt—the best-looking racing sim on any format. The game supports, but doesn't require, MMX chipsets and Direct3D-compatible accelerated video cards. I ran the game with both Rendition and Voodoo cards, and each performed flawlessly. Photorealistic prerendered backdrops—replete with recognizable landmarks, such as the St. Louis Arch—swirl about in smooth 360-degree motion, as the track snakes seamlessly below, creating believable ambience.

CART's Instant Replay screen is yet another highlight, featuring 12 camera views (each of which you can manually zoom or rotate), VCR-style controls, and eight types of Pi race analysis graphs. Use these graphs to study your racing habits, such as lateral/inline acceleration, steering angle, braking, throttling, engine



DEAD HEAT Whether you're matched against an aggressive computer AI or up to eight players, via the Internet, CART offers nonstop racing challenges.



Price: $54.95
System Requirements: Pentium 60 (P166 recommended), Windows 95 or NT, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), 30MB hard-drive space (100MB recommended), 2x CD-ROM drive; supports MMX and AGP technologies, DirectSound-compatible sound cards, mouse, and force-feedback joysticks; LAN connection or modem required for head-to-head play.
3D Support: Direct3D-compatible video cards.
Multiplayer Support: LAN (2–8 players, 1 CD per player), Internet (1–4 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: Terminal Reality, Inc.
Publisher: Microsoft
Redmond, WA
(206) 882-8080
www.microsoft.com

speed, and gearing. More than just technical window dressing, these graphs will actually help you improve your on-track performance.

CHROME WHEELED

This game is so full of subtle graphical treats, it's difficult to know where to begin. As your vehicle eats up the asphalt, trackside objects such as trees and buildings gradually materialize—as opposed to suddenly popping up, as in almost all other racing sims—showcasing the 3D card's transparency effects. And take a gander at your race in instant replay, using the "race" view camera. The combination of 3D perspective correction and surround sound stereo will make you think you're watching a video clip from an actual race. Outstanding!

High-performance stereo surround sounds also play a big part in CART's hyper-realism. Slide off the track and you'll hear the squishy sound of slick tires on wet grass. Jam an opponent or kiss the retaining wall too hard and you'll hear the sickening sound of metal scraping the ground or rubbing against your tires. Even off-track noise is presented with sensational Doppler stereo effects. The only thing missing is the annoying chatter of a race announcer, a feature most serious Indy Car fans would turn off anyway.

Now for an annoyance: Microsoft's minimum requirements for the game list a Pentium 60, but recommend a P166. That's quite a jump. I tested the game on a P90, and the frame rate sputtered and control was taxing, even with a 3D video card. To achieve decent animation, I had to seriously dumb down the graphics by removing all backgrounds, trackside objects, special effects, and vehicle detail. On the higher end, I then ran the game on my P233 MMX machine with Monster 3D video card. The frame rate burned off the charts, even with all graphic and sound details set to max. The moral here: CART is designed for high-performance machines, period. If your system is less than capable, this will be a frustrating experience. If you've got the horsepower, prepare to be blown away by one of the speediest, most graphically rich racing sims on the market.



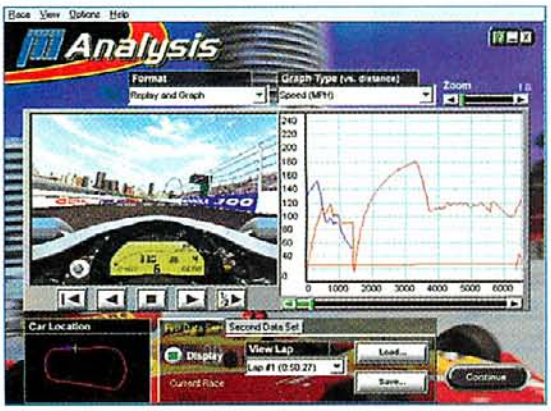
HEY HEY WE'RE A GREASE MONKEY CART's fully equipped garage lets drivers tinker and test-drive almost any setting, with instant analysis by engineer Nigel Benett.

CHECKERED FLAG

Controls can be set to keyboard, joystick, gamepad, or steering wheel, with special support for force-feedback sticks. Again, control responsiveness is directly related to machine speed. On a slow system, there's a maddening delay between steering response and on-screen action, which typically sends your vehicle swerving all over the track. On a high-end system, control is crisp and tight. A plethora of driving aids are at your disposal, depending on your skill setting, including autobrake, spin correction, cued shifting, traction control, and driving cones.

There are also realism settings designed to create a more authentic driving experience, including tire wear, crash damage, fuel consumption, and temperature effects. My personal favorite is head panning, available in cockpit view, which simulates the turn of a driver's head as he enters a curve. The camera shifts slightly off-center, into the turn, amplifying the feeling of actually being in the car. What's truly amazing is that no one had thought of this before.

Overall, the verdict on this game is a simple one: Packed with features, options, and the widest variety of tracks found in any PC racing sim, Microsoft's CART PRECISION RACING qualifies as the best game of its type ever produced.



RACING À LA MODE Use CART'S Pi Analysis graphs to study your on-track performance and fine-tune your driving skills.

APPEAL: Intermediate to advanced IndyCar-style racing fans.

PROS: Stunning graphics; support for 3D-accelerated video; excellent frame rate; aggressive computer AI; driving school; options galore.

CONS: Long load times; steep system requirements.

CG RATED



Be sure to check out Microsoft's CART PRECISION RACING on this month's CG-ROM.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Underachiever

The Usual Action Thrills, But MADDEN Still Misses the Mark

by Dennis McCauley

Question: What do Rocket Ismail, Rick Mirer, and Heath Shuler have in common? Answer: They're all high draft choices, yet not one has lived up to the hype that preceded his arrival on the NFL scene. While we're on the topic, feel free to add EA Sports' MADDEN NFL 98 to your list of pro football letdowns. Sure, it's a good game that's fun to play and is chock-full of eye candy. But it's not the bulked-up MADDEN that gamers had been drooling for.

Even before last summer's E3, sources at EA Sports hinted that traditionally arcade-oriented MADDEN would be encroaching onto the football sim turf normally dominated by Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO series. Anticipation ran accordingly high among hard-core sports gamers.

The tip-off that there would ultimately be less to MADDEN than met the eye came, oddly enough, in the timing of the game's release. When a developer touts major enhancements to an existing system, veteran gamers have learned to expect delays — sometimes significant delays. Surprisingly, MADDEN 98 shipped two months *ahead* of schedule — without a number of the expected new features.

BUTTON POUNDING

One thing MADDEN isn't missing is satisfying arcade play. The action elements are quite challenging, especially at the All-Madden level. While the game supports only four-button controllers, there's enough happening on the field to keep even expert joystick jockeys furiously punching their game pads. It takes practice to be competitive at MADDEN 98. Punting is difficult to master, as is touch passing, which allows players to zing the ball past tight coverage, or loft the pigskin when they need to air it out.

Although EA Sports has made a name for itself with eye-pleasing action games, MADDEN 98 is not an especially impressive graphic achievement. In fact, the players look very much like those in last year's version. Their animations, however, are more fluid. Players make diving tackles or high-step into the end zone with a realistic strut. Beginning with this year's Win 95 version, EA Sports has employed an animation technique they've dubbed "V-Poly." The English translation is that the players are comprised of multiple sprites, rather than the large, attractive polygons found in other EA products, such as TRIPLE PLAY 98, NBA LIVE 98, and NHL 98.

V-Poly works well enough, but it just doesn't compare to player graphics in the rest of the EA Sports line. One thing that is impressive about MADDEN's graphics is the rendering of the stadiums. Finally, football fans have an opportunity to play in authentic venues. While MADDEN shipped without 3D hardware support, a subsequent patch added 3Dfx support, as well as additional graphical enhancements, including on-screen player names.

The camera angles in MADDEN 98 are rather limited, and feature only sideline, end zone, or blimp views, which can be set to dynamically track the action. This, however, causes no headaches in the game, since the three views function well. In the just-for-fun department, an authentic-looking Topps football card pops up when a player makes a big play or reaches a statistical milestone.

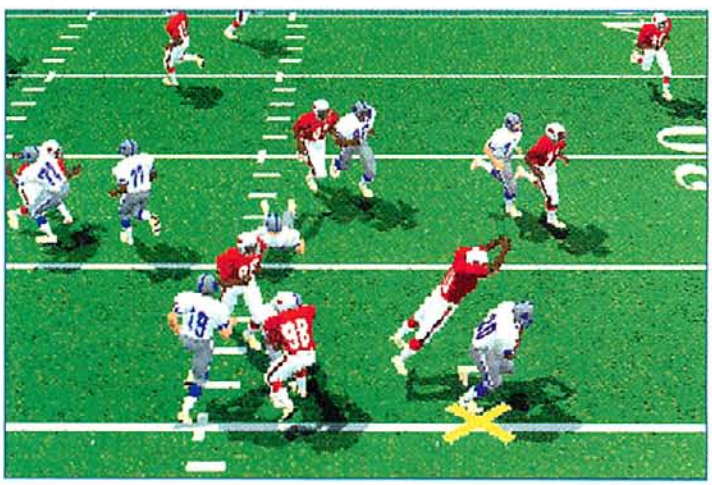
FUNNY NUMBERS

MADDEN 98 offers league and general manager utilities that seem to be part of its would-be move into sim territory. The transition would be more newsworthy, however, if the utilities worked better. The General Manager feature, for example, allows trading, but only of a brain-damaged variety in which your opponents offer a mirror image of the players you dangle as trade bait. Put your backup quarterback on the block, for example, and your opponents offer you theirs in return. It's pretty tough to improve your club trading this way. There's no free-agent pool, either, although the player ratings do list salaries. Am I smelling a salary cap feature in next year's version? Let's hope so!

League play options include simulating the 1997 NFL season or creating a smaller league with a randomly generated



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Windows 95, Pentium 133, 75MB hard-drive space, 16MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, High-color 1MB Direct Draw-compatible video card, DirectX 5.0-compatible sound card, mouse. Supports most popular gamepads.
3D Support: 3Dfx (via downloadable patch only)
Multiplayer Support: LAN, modem, serial connection (2 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer/Publisher: EA Sports
San Mateo, CA
(650) 571-7171
www.easports.com



SLICE AND DICE Barry Sanders looks for somewhere to run in MADDEN NFL 98, a game with great arcade action.

schedule. CPU-simmed games zip by quickly, and generate stats that are fairly realistic. Unfortunately, MADDEN's statistical presentation leaves much to be desired. It's a chore to navigate your way to the stats you want, and when you finally get there the presentation is nonstandard. While team stats are available at the league screen, you have to read the manual to know that the player stats can only be found at the franchise screen. Once there, you'll have to endure several mouse clicks to find such important stats as rushing attempts or yards-per-carry for running backs; completion percentages for quarterbacks; or even receptions for receivers. This was an unexpected fumble for a game with simlike aspirations.

MADDEN 98's sound is a mixed bag. There are some real ear-pleasers, such as the crowd correctly booing, cheering, or shouting "defense" in response to the game situation. Of course, John Madden's witty gridiron insights are always a welcome addition. On the other hand, play-by-play man Pat Summerall brings little of note. Summerall's gifts as a broadcaster simply don't shine through. Occasional errors also occur, causing misstatements of the game situation. Most annoying, however, are the contact sounds—these sound more like someone tumbling down a flight of stairs. The good news is that you can toggle off the sounds that offend the ear, and keep the ones that don't.



DUMBER THAN DAVIS? MADDEN 98's General Manager feature is marred by a brain-dead trade feature.



STEAMIN' RICE Topps football cards provide nice eye candy when players hit statistical milestones or make big plays.

THE PLAY'S THE THING

EA Sports has spent a great deal of energy trumpeting the "Liquid AI" in MADDEN 98. The term refers to an enhanced player ability to read and react to plays, and not merely follow a set of pre-programmed instructions. While it's difficult to gauge the overall effectiveness of the new AI, players do seem to move authentically. The AI problems that troubled me, however, related primarily to offensive play-calling, and the tendency of quarterbacks—even very good quarterbacks—to throw into triple- and quadruple-coverage.

As an example, during a Chiefs-Dolphins game, the CPU-controlled Fish, trailing by two TDs well into the fourth quarter, went for it on 4th-and-18. No problem there. Ignoring the strong right arm of one Dan Marino, however, the computer called a draw play—and got stuffed. The EA Sports team also needs to address a work stoppage of sorts on the part of running backs, who occasionally freeze after taking a hand-off. The referees may also be on strike, since penalty calls seem rare.

Play selection in MADDEN is serviceable, but suffers from the lack of a play design utility. With both Sierra's FRONT PAGE and OT Sports' MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL offering substantial play-design features, MADDEN must address this area in future versions. Multiplayer options at press time were limited to modem, serial, or IPX. A patch offering Internet play was announced, but not yet released.

FEEL THE POWER

Despite some warts, MADDEN 98 is an enjoyable game. The smooth player animations and good-looking stadiums add a lot to the pro football feel. There's an incredible selection of historical NFL and AFL teams that's sure to please the type of hardcore fan who salivates at the thought of pitting the '67 Packers against the '69 Namath-led Jets. Especially appealing is the improved Madden 101, which explains sophisticated offensive and defensive theory in a clear, concise manner that, in itself, is almost worth the price of admission. As a bonus, there's a multimedia scouting report of each NFL team, and brief video histories of most clubs as well.

Aspiring to bridge the gap between its own classic arcade elements and the sim orientation of its more cerebral competition, MADDEN finds itself hamstrung by weak G.M. and stat modules, as well as a lack of play-design capability. It's better than last year's version, but once again, MADDEN will be watching the playoffs from home.

APPEAL: Arcade sports gamers; NFL history buffs; John Madden fans.

PROS: Fluid animation, challenging arcade elements, tons of classic teams, a chance to learn from the master.

CONS: Weak trade and stat modules; no play-design utility; curious AI play-calling; frozen running-back bug.

CG RATED

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Rebuilding Year

Sierra's Storied Franchise Finally Falls From Its Lofty Perch

by Terry Coleman

Critics-come-lately would have you believe that the FRONT PAGE FOOTBALL line has been in steady decline since the publication of the original FOOTBALL PRO. This is pure, unmitigated crap. The series *did* hit its peak with FPS FOOTBALL PRO '95, but few gaming franchises have endured quite the roller-coaster ride of this one. Last year, FPS FOOTBALL PRO '97 did a lot toward redeeming the franchise—once you installed the inevitable second or third patch. Problem is, Sierra seems to be in a down cycle with this year's version, and a patch alone may not be enough to rescue it.

End-of-Year Stats

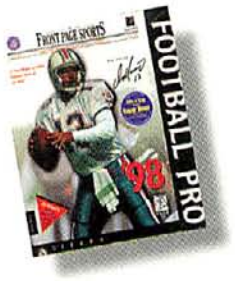
New Feature	Gains Yardage	Penalized for
Improved arcade play	You can actually pass	Still too difficult
Radio commentary	Sounds like radio	Stalls gameplay
CAMS system	Still-fluid camera work	Defaults to TV view
Career play	Unique in sports games	This is new?
Player AI	Better than most games	Same as FPS '97
3D environment	True physics-based	No 3D support
Fast-sim mode	It's slightly faster	It's still inaccurate
Play editor	Still robust	Flaky play update

ILLEGAL MOTION

The big question has to be: Where's the 3D hardware support? After all, FPS FOOTBALL PRO '98 is a true physics-based sim, not a stat-freak affair. The game engine moves 22 simulated players around the screen in realtime, and employing some kind of 3D support would both help the frame rate and allow for more intricate 3D player models.

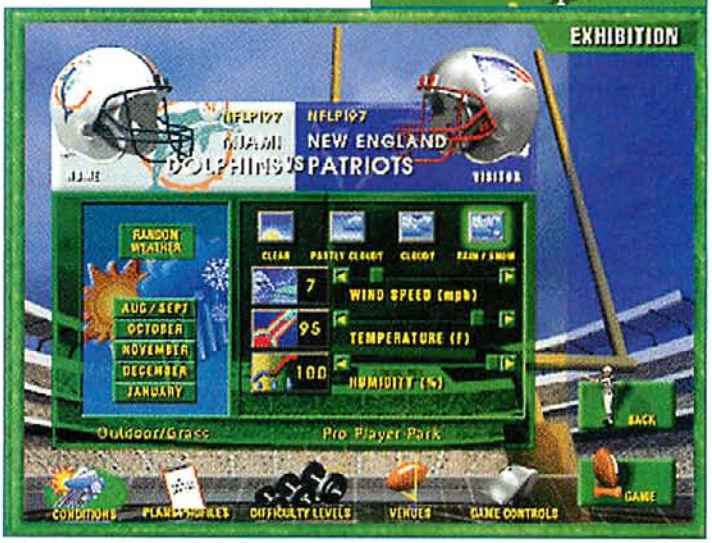
Also, the interface has inexplicably changed for the worse. Sure, it's flashier, but it's also more difficult to get around in, especially when you're playing in career mode over the course of several seasons. It's hard to fathom why this latest edition—which looks disturbingly similar to its DOS origins—requires so much hardware for so little return: FPS FOOTBALL PRO '97, for example, runs better on a P133 than FPS FOOTBALL PRO '98 runs on a P166 MMX. Why?

Despite the fact that the developers had another year to work out the problem, multiplay over LAN or Internet is still a frustrating series of lock-ups and crashes. The touted arcade mode is still far too arcane to pose any challenge to MADDEN '98. I could go on about other annoyances (and I did: see the accompanying chart), but suffice it to say that FPS FOOTBALL PRO '98 is best viewed as an expansion disk. Whether you should buy it depends on whether you want an arcade game, such as MADDEN, or a serious football sim—and if you believe that Sierra can finally fix the Internet multiplay problems. As for me, I've gone back to FPS FOOTBALL PRO '97—still the best pigskin simulation on the market.



Price: $29.95
System Requirements: Pentium 75 (P133 recommended), Windows 95, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), 150MB hard-drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM (4x CD-ROM recommended), mouse; supports Win 95-compatible sound cards and joysticks.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Internet, LAN, and Sierra Internet Gaming Service (2 players); 1 CD per player.
Designer: Synergistic
Original Front Page Football Design: Patrick Cook
Publisher: Sierra On-Line, Bellevue, WA (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com





TURF PORTRAITS As this close-up shows (top), FPS FOOTBALL PRO '98 doesn't look as great during gameplay as the slick interface screen (bottom) would have you believe.

APPEAL: For serious football fans only.

PROS: Still the best football sim; better ball movement; new graphics; aggressively priced.

CONS: New interface; crashes/lock-ups, particularly in multiplay; no 3D hardware support.

CG RATED

AMD

PGL PROFESSIONAL GAMERS' LEAGUE

PGL™ OFFICIAL NEWS UPDATE

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THE AMD®PGL™ - CHANGING THE FACE OF COMPETITIVE GAMING

One of the goals of the PGL has been to create a single, central location for top-tier gamers to strut their stuff. Well, we're proud to report that this objective was met the day we opened the PGL doors. As quickly as PGL officials launched the league's first qualification period, things got truly serious: With so much fame, fortune and reputation up for grabs, players immediately got down to the business of "making the cut" to participate in the PGL "regular season." No more trash-talking. Very little joking. Nary a "good game" or "Whoop! DefConKilla is in da house!" It was all about kill or be killed. The result? Some of the most intense QUAKE and Red Alert action EVER. And that was before the deathmatches even started! If your idea of online gaming is no-holds-barred, all-out WAR, then the PGL is the place to be.



QUAKE®



Command & Conquer®: Red Alert™

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TV .com

SEASON 2 COMING TO RAWK YOR WORLD

PGL SEASON 2 IS STARTING SOON

AND AS PROMISED, IT WILL FEATURE NEW ACTION AND STRATEGY GAMES AND A NEW GAME CATEGORY. REPLACING THE ALL-TIME CLASSICS QUAKE AND COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT WILL BE THE HOTTEST NEW TITLES, **QUAKE II** AND **TOTAL ANNIHILATION.** QUAKE II IS WAY MORE EXTREME THAN THE ORIGINAL, WITH EVEN MORE DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS, SPRAWLING LEVELS AND JAW-DROPPING GRAPHICS. TOTAL ANNIHILATION IS THE MOST SOPHISTICATED STRATEGY GAME EVER, COMBINING 3D ARTICULATED BATTLE UNITS WITH VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS EXPANSION CAPABILITIES. TURNING UP THE COMPETITIVE HEAT EVEN FURTHER, THE PGL WILL ADD A THIRD CATEGORY IN SEASON 2: ACTION TEAMPLAY, WITH QUAKE II AS THE CATEGORY TITLE. SO GO START A CLAN, PRACTICE BY YOURSELF, READ UP ON THE FUTURE HISTORY OF WAR — WHATEVER. BUT BE SURE TO CHECK OUT WWW.PGL.COM TO GET THE LATEST NEWS ON SEASON 2.



QUAKE® II



TOTAL ANNIHILATION™

RANKINGS UPDATE

When you establish the first pro sports league for computer gamers, you've gotta expect thousands of players to show up. So how do you separate the great gamers from the good? By running 'em all through a rigorous month-long qualifying round and evaluating their skillz every step of the way. Using the most sophisticated rankings database on the planet, courtesy of TEN™, the PGL took nearly 1,500 Season 1 entrants and found the top 256. This isn't one of those wimpy ranking systems that just calculates your "kill-to-death" rate. This is the "two years in the making, two years of real-world usage" ranking system that all the other gaming sites and services have been trying to duplicate. Based on the logic and methodology of the U.S. Chess Federation system, the PGL ranking engine screams. With every encounter in every match, the PGL ranking machine considers the relative skill level of each opponent, while re-calculating your rank in real-time. See your position in the standings updated instantaneously every time you exit a match. Leaf through the reams of background data to analyze your opponents' (or your own) strengths, weaknesses, preferred weapons, and other tendencies. Or, just gaze enviously at Reptile's and B2's immaculate stats and dream of the day...

PGL RANKINGS

Season 1
Qualification Period

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT

Rank	Screen Name	Score
1	**BJ2**	**19640**
2	SOLJA	19242
3	push	18974
4	N-same	18687
5	MOBBIN	18433
6	unabomber1	18415
7	Havoc3	18396
8	Hoggleford	18395
9	WaGnaRd	18303
10	DeepBlue	18287

QUAKE

Rank	Screen Name	Score
1	**Rept-POST**	**20308**
2	Azrael13	20135
3	frick	20014
4	dmann	19909
5	B2	19662
6	cabalist	19489
7	graphik	19106
8	D13-Unholy	18732
9	Rykov_	18657
10	Kryotekk	18480

www.pgl.com

AMD PGL

PLAYER PROFILES

BJ2 Young Gun of the Strategy Set

BJ2 (real name: Ben Helms) may be in his early teens, but that hasn't prevented him from rising to the "pole position" in the Red Alert division of the PGL's inaugural season. Although he's only been playing for nine months, BJ2 has risen through the Red Alert ranks on TEN, residing on the top 10 list for some time now. Being seeded #1 in the strategy category of the PGL's inaugural season is just his latest gaming accomplishment. And with four years to go before college rears its ugly head, BJ2 stands to enjoy his pro gamer status for some time to come. "I'm not sure how my parents would react if I told them I was blowing off college to 'pursue a pro career' as a computer gamer," he laughs.

His father couldn't gripe too much, since he's the one who got BJ2 started in the online gaming space. "My dad and I began playing Red Alert last winter from the CD. Enclosed in the CD was an advertisement for TEN, and we decided it would be a great challenge to test our skills against other opponents around the country," he says. They set up the account, "BJ2," primarily for Ben to play; his father's involvement was mostly to ensure that TEN was a safe environment for kids. "As we began to play more, my skills surpassed my dad's, and he started dragging my rank down, so I gave him the boot," BJ2 chuckles.

In the meantime, BJ2 has his hands full competing in the PGL. "I personally prefer 3-on-3 games of Red Alert on TEN, 'cause they're more exciting, with the cooperation and coordination necessary to work as a team. But 1-on-1 matches, like the PGL offers, really bring out an individual player's true skills; you can tell pretty quickly if you're facing a strong adversary. And in the PGL, nearly every player is a high-caliber opponent."



Name: Ben Helms A.K.A: BJ2 Age: 14 Years played: 9 months
Arch nemesis: Hoggleford or Unabomber1
Favorite Partner: My long time TEN friend and partner, LAZYDOG
Preferred Weapons: Russian Heavy Tank
Controller: Mouse and Keyboard
Honors/Awards: Top 10 in Red Alert on TEN for a long while, and finished number 1 in Red Alert pgl qualification.
Residence: Tennessee
Connection: 28.8 CPU Speed: 100 mhz
Favorite level: Path Beyond and No Escape
Hobbies: Football, Water Skiing, Board War Games
Favorite Saying: "Bring it on, Boys!!!"

Reptile Scaling the PGL Ranks

Rept-POST, aka Reptile (real name: Jim Dangcil) has been playing video and computer games for nearly three quarters of his life. At twenty-one, he says that amounts to more than 10,000 hours of electronic gaming in one form or another. But from his vantage point perched atop the PGL QUAKE leader board, it looks like time well spent. "The PGL came along at the perfect time for me, since I'm just hitting my stride in terms of gaming skills. And since I'm still pretty young, I think there's still room for improvement in my game," he states.

An accomplished practitioner of "close-up" (coin and card) magic, Reptile has made many an opponent disappear in a cloud of smoke and gibbage. "Just like performing magic tricks, the key in QUAKE or any action game is to immerse yourself in what you're doing and do it again and again until it becomes almost second nature," says Reptile.

Being ranked number one among the 128 elite action gamers who "made the cut" in PGL Season 1 doesn't come as a surprise to the ultra-competitive Reptile. While he doesn't think of himself as the very best (yet), he prides himself on being extremely confident in his abilities and aggressive in his approach to the game. "I know there are players out there who get more recognition, and are considered better than me. I'm confident enough in my abilities that I relish the prospect of playing the best. And I truly believe I have a legitimate chance to beat anyone, when I go on the Internet looking for my next victim!"



Name: Jim Dangcil A.K.A: Rept-POST (aka Reptile) Age: 21 Years played: 15
Preferred Weapons: Lightning Gun and Rocket Launcher
Controller: Logitech Mouse and Microsoft Keyboard
Honors/Awards: Top 8 in Red Annihilation Tournament
Residence: Chatsworth, CA
Connection: T1 CPU Speed: 266mhz
Favorite levels: DM6, DM4, DM2
Hobbies: Close-up Magic, Basketball, Multiplayer Computer Games
Favorite Saying: Would you like some cheese with that whine??

BOARD MEMBERS

The PGL's governing board is a veritable "who's who" of electronic entertainment industry luminaries. Beginning with commissioner Nolan Bushnell, the board's illustrious members have each been responsible for some of the biggest hits that this business has ever seen. Here's a closer look at two influential PGL board members:



BRETT SPERRY: President and CEO, Westwood Studios; President, Worldwide Publishing, Virgin Interactive

Sperry co-founded Westwood Studios in 1985. His passion for business and his visionary leadership continues to keep the company at the top of the entertainment software industry year after year. Sperry remains actively involved in product development and has been a key architect and creative force behind several product lines including: The Eye of the Beholder and Lands of Lore fantasy games, The Kyrandia Adventures, and the Command & Conquer strategy line.

"The PGL is truly as important for the entertainment software industry as it is for the gamers themselves. The industry needs a 'platform' that will raise computer gaming to the level of other competitive sports, and attract a broad consumer market of both participants and spectators. I've been in the computer games business for a dozen years, and the PGL is the most exciting single concept I've encountered during that time."
– Brett Sperry



PETER MOLYNEUX: Founder/Managing Director, LionHead Studios

Peter Molyneux is one of the best-known names in the international world of computer games. He co-founded Bullfrog Productions in 1987 and single-handedly created a new genre of computer games (the "god game" with the release of Populous). Over the past ten years, Molyneux has been responsible for a string of immensely popular games including Powermonger, Theme Park, Magic Carpet and most recently Dungeon Keeper. Cumulative sales of his games are now approaching the ten million mark world-wide. Earlier this year Molyneux left Bullfrog Productions to form a new games development company, Lionhead Studios.

"Great computer gamers are like great artists — highly skilled in a particular craft, and truly a breed apart. The PGL concept is unique and appropriate: bring established and aspiring superstars together, and give them a place that will showcase and reward their talents. I'm pleased and proud to be a member of the PGL governing board, and look forward to a thrilling inaugural year."
– Peter Molyneux

$250,000 in cash and prizes!

There's a whole lotta cash up for grabs in the PGL. How much cash exactly? Try $30,000+ in each three-month season, for a total of more than $120,000 for the first year. Here's how all the loot stacks up for a Year 1:



Over $120,000 in cash



Fully-loaded, AMD-K6™ MMX™ Enhanced Processor-based PCs



Logitech® game controllers

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Outlaw 3D graphics accelerator boards from Jazz Multimedia (V2200 Rendition™-based)

MicroWorks™ speakers from Cambridge SoundWorks® and Creative Labs

Autographed game...and much more

TOTAL: $250,000 in cash and prizes

www.pgl.com

PGL OFFICIALS: THEY'VE GOT THE TOOLS TO MAKE THE RULES



3 members of the PGL Officiating Crew

Running the PGL at the "in-the-trenches" level is not supposed to be pretty. It's all about officiating, monitoring, recording and broadcasting more than 250 competitive, structured multiplayer matches in less than 6 weeks, to determine the top 8 players in each game category. Well, the league's referees are earning their pay big-time "filming" each match for posterity, enforcing rules that many players have only heard about, and otherwise maintaining order in games based on premeditated mass murder. The PGL officials are literally working around the clock to create the most democratic environment for serious online competition that the 'Net has ever seen. Have you hugged a PGL referee today?

GO TO #089 @ www.computergaming.com/infolink

THE PGL WEB SITE: CYBER "SPORTS CENTRAL"

Whether you're among the elite players competing in the PGL, or just a casual gamer, or only want to watch, the one Web site you oughtta bookmark is "www.pgl.com," home base for the Professional Gamers' League. Stats, standings, schedules, profiles, box scores, game summaries, downloadable demos, highlight reels, scouting films — it's all here. Coming soon: the ability to sit back in the comfort of your home (or office cube) and watch a PGL match via streaming video. The PGL site was designed with all of the PGL audiences in mind, from players to spectators. PGL players: scout your next official match using tons of data gathered from your opponents' previous battles. Fans: read up on the personal and professional sides of PGL stars like Thresh, Pookie, DeepBlue and Azrael13. Spectators: check the season schedules for upcoming PGL matches, when and where they'll be aired, etc. In short, catch up on all things PGL at www.pgl.com



www.pgl.com

Sign Up Now!

To compete in PGL Season 2, you must register at www.pgl.com, then follow the qualification rules to "make the cut." There's more than $250,000 in cash and prizes available in the first year alone!

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Jack Attacks

CG CHOICE

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

JACK NICKLAUS 5 TAKES LINKS HEAD ON

by Scott A. May

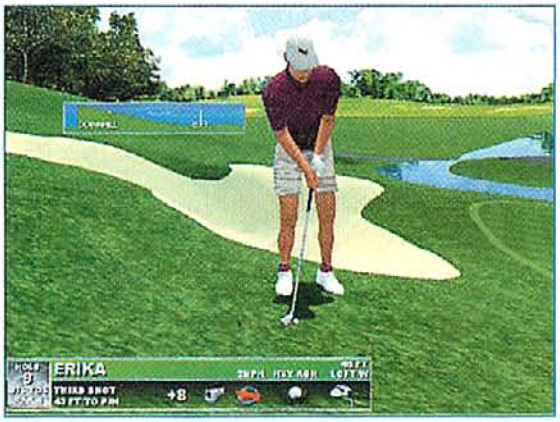
Talk about an unexpected surprise. How does Accolade follow up JACK NICKLAUS 4, arguably the best golf sim on the planet? With JACK NICKLAUS 5, of course. But what's unexpected is that JN5 comes so close on the heels of JN4—the games were released less than seven months apart. An even bigger surprise is how Accolade made this a great game even better.

The first thing you notice about JN5 is its smooth, "we've got this genre nailed" attitude. And indeed they do. A bluesy Booker T-inspired riff welcomes players to an astonishing lineup of 10, 18-hole courses, the most of any golf sim on the market. In addition to the links found in the previous title, JN5 offers five new courses: exotic Hualalai Resort Golf Club in Hawaii, South Shore Golf Club at Lake Las Vegas, Ireland's Mount Juliet Golf Club, and two original designs, Monterey Bay and Challenge at Danger Bay, both sculpted with the built-in course architect.

BUFFER DUFFERS

Improvements to last year's model are numerous, starting with a more aggressive computer AI. Digital opponents pump up their play in response to your own increasing skills. Game speed has also been significantly tweaked, both in solo rounds and in the wide range of multiplayer modes, including serial, modem, LAN, and network connections. Accolade has made it easier to find opponents online, thanks to its new Game Matching Service, a user-friendly method of locating and matching Internet players of equal skills.

Graphics remain a highlight of JN5, which features the same groundbreaking proprietary height-mapping model used in the previous version of the game. Game physics have been tweaked to allow for uneven and hillside lies, which add to the game's realism. However, the biggest change is the addition of polygonal golfers, who replace the old cut-and-paste FMV images. Comprised of 2,000 polygons with motion-captured animation, the new onscreen golfers are utterly amazing. These guys are unquestionably the most natural and lifelike digital golfers I've ever seen—they blend perfectly with the foreground graphics.



POLY TECH Accolade's new 2,000-count polygonal golfers deliver unprecedented detail and fluid motion. Also new: uneven lies and custom camera views.

Another big change is the introduction of the MouseMeter, the latest attempt by game designers to offer a more intrinsic method of swinging the virtual club. Viewed from an overhead perspective, players move the mouse right for backswing and then quickly to the left to make contact. Moving the mouse slightly up or down on the follow-through produces a slice or hook. Excellent try, Accolade, but no cigar. There's absolutely no way to judge how far your shot will travel based on your wrist snap. Two seemingly similar swings can vary in distance as much as 50–75 yards. Add that up over the course of 18 holes and this little gizmo can easily cost you a match. Luckily, the MouseMeter is only an option; both double- and triple-click swing meters are available for old-timers.

DESIGNER DREAMS

JN5's biggest draw remains its built-in course designer, a feature no other golf sim can touch with a 10-foot driver. More powerful than ever, the designer—modeled after Nicklaus Productions' own proprietary CAD system—offers even greater freedom to change textures, add objects, and alter course layouts. You can now also import custom graphics and sound effects created with third-party applications. Unfortunately, you still have to save and exit the designer to test a hole—one oversight not corrected from the previous version of the game. And despite the interface improvements, the learning curve is still quite steep. But it's an investment well worth making, considering the long-term enjoyment it promises.

Overall, JACK NICKLAUS 5 is a worthy upgrade to an already classic golf sim. If you enjoyed the last round, you'll find yourself falling in love all over again.



APPEAL: Golf nuts of any skill.

PROS: Faster play and killer graphics; better course designer; beefed-up computer AI; choice of three types of swing mechanics.

CONS: Optional MouseMeter swing mechanics still not a viable alternative to traditional twitch-'n'-click meters.

CG RATED ★★★★★

Price: $39.95
System Requirements: Pentium 120, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 16-bit graphics card, 4x CD-ROM drive, 137MB free hard-drive space, keyboard or mouse; Win 95-compatible sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Modem (2 players), serial (2 players), LAN (2–8 players); 1 CD per player.
Designer: Eclipse Entertainment
Publisher: Accolade
San Jose, CA
(800) 245-7744
www.accolade.com

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KESMAI STUDIOS

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Dirt Ball



SODA Off-Road Racing Is So Real You'll Feel the Mud in Your Eye

by Gordon Goble

What would you expect if Papyrus Design Group, the minds behind the classic NASCAR Racing, decided to go off-roading? Considering the source, you might expect a realistic, off-road simulation with excellent vehicle dynamics and an accent on garage know-how. And that's a perfect description of SODA Off-Road Racing.

In fact, though SODA has Papyrus' name written all over it, the company was on board in an advisory and support role only. This superb simulation was actually crafted for Papyrus (and ultimately Sierra On-Line) by a little developer called Software Allies, which has lent a minor helping hand to previous Papyrus efforts. SODA is Software Allies' first solo excursion, and it's probably the finest off-road title ever, putting to shame Accolade's atrocious Test Drive: Off Road and driving Microsoft's Monster Truck Madness right off the road.



HOOD REMOVAL MACHINE The SODA replay gives graphic proof why reverse tracking is *not* recommended.

MY NAME IS MUD

SODA gives gamers the opportunity to drive one of three different off-road vehicle types through a variety of dirt and mud environments that often resemble roller coasters more than racetracks. The drive is slow, jolting, and difficult—just as it should be—and is perfectly suited to anyone who appreciates the hammering that real-life off-road drivers take as they struggle to keep their mounts pointed in the right direction through the most horrid of conditions.

And we're not talking inclement weather here, folks. Indeed, SODA events always take place under glorious blue skies with just a hint of clouds. It's what they're run *upon* that is the cause for concern. This is loose, deep soil, the type of terrain that would bog down most any other sort of race car, the type that sprays up from tires and refuses to allow anything but a cautious, controlled approach. The fact that treacherous cliffs, steep hills, sudden abutments, and gaps in the roadway are strewn about only adds to the fear that you could be tossed off the beaten path at any moment.

But whether you opt for the lightweight "buggie" class, the high-powered two-wheel-drive truck, or the equally potent four-wheel-drive category, one thing remains constant—SODA *feels* real. Take a given turn at 50 mph and watch as your rear wheels kick out from under you or your front end comes around. Then, on your next circuit, take the same turn at 47 mph. That 3-mph differential may well be enough to keep your tires on the ground, if you've approached the turn in the exact same manner, that is. If not, you may catch a little grass on the left, a little of that dip on the right, or merely get a little "out of shape." Whatever, there's a good chance you won't experience the same results. Nor should you.

TOUCHY FEELY

SODA is perhaps the most "touchy" Papyrus title to date, which adds to its inherent difficulty. *Any* fast steering maneuver is a guarantee of failure, as is quick acceleration or sudden braking. Instead, smooth, fluid movements are the trick. Though it's frustrating and seemingly impossible at first, considering the conditions, you simply have to stick with it on just one course, going over it again and again, until you've mastered the almost gentle driving style the game demands. You know—kind of like what you had to do the first times you ran NASCAR Racing.

Certainly you can't expect carnage on a level of NASCAR Racing, but various body chunks do tend to crumple and detach, and your vehicle may accrue enough damage to prematurely end your day. It's unfortunate, then, that SODA does a rather poor job of graphically highlighting crashes—it's usually a rather insignificant bump and very little audio.

Graphically, SODA seems a bit rough at first, but the pieces fall into place once you start driving, no matter which of the



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, 60MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit sound card (Win 95- and DirectX3-compatible), VLB/PCI SVGA DirectX3-compatible graphics adapter.
3D Support: Rendition-based 3D-accelerator boards.
Multiplayer Support: LAN (2–6 players, 1 CD per player), modem (2 players, 1 CD per player), or serial connection (2 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: Software Allies, Inc.
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Bellevue, WA
(800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Roll Your Own

Virtually every racing game since Papyrus' INDY 500 has been haunted by one drawback: a limited number of tracks. Both wild arcade games and serious simulations tend to wear a bit thin after prolonged exposure to the same corners, the same straights, and the same track idiosyncrasies.

Fortunately for those of us who believe you can never have enough of a good thing, Dr. SODA has come to the rescue with a track construction kit that's sure to cure. It's easy to use and offers up results on a par with the game's prepackaged circuits—better, if you spend enough time and effort.

The SODA Track Designer is a stand-alone utility that starts you off with a simple oval track floating above a simple grid, as viewed through numerous free-floating cameras. By adjusting nodes on the road surface or on the grid, the track can take on whatever shape you can dream up with whatever elevation changes strike your fancy. Monster jumps? Banked hairpin turns? Figure 8 with a mud bog on one side and a giant chasm on the other? No problem.

After you've set the basic layout, you'll want to add some objects. The program takes care of background scenery and cordons off your track area with walls and signs, but the rest is up to you. Now, you can't go and draw an enormous monument to, say, Tammy Faye Baker and plunk it down in the middle of the infield, but enough objects are provided to keep most track architects satisfied, including puddles, foliage, grandstands, banners, barns, and silos. In the end, I'd managed to piece together a challenging and I dare say attractive course in just a couple of hours.

The downside? Well, though you can drive your new hunk of landscape in solo mode right away, for computerized competition you're going to have to devote several hours of your computer's time to SODA's "Learn" mode, which instills artificial intelligence into the program's cars (though some might argue that they don't get quite smart enough). Fortunately, this lengthy procedure can be interrupted and picked up again later or run quite inconspicuously in the background while you spend your time on more constructive things—like writing a game review.



D.I.Y. Once you put a "skin" on the framework of your custom track, it's ready for racing.



TAILGATING IN THE DESERT A bumper cam view of the Goodyear Buggy.



HIGH JUMP SODA courses pack a little of everything, including monster jumps like this.

many free-floating viewing perspectives you've selected. The vicinity around your car is vividly rendered, with rampant texturing that offers a convincing sense of speed. All the vehicles move, bounce, and shudder in a wonderful re-creation of real life; the graphics lose their authenticity only under extreme bumper-to-bumper action, when you feel as if you're "merging" with the truck ahead.

The game offers 12 stock courses, each from one of three environment types (desert, country, and tropics) made up of individual palettes and unique peripheral scenery. SODA offers full Rendition support, though even with a Screamin' 3D and a P200 I was forced to lower some of the detail to bump the frame rate to optimum levels. Fortunately, SODA packs graphic options galore and *should* work just fine with any upscale rig.

Of course, Papyrus wouldn't put its name on a title that didn't feature an imposing garage and setup facility. Such is the case with SODA, which lets you modify your setup to your heart's content—and suffer the consequences of your tinkering.

All in all, SODA OFF ROAD RACING is an appealing, original racing game with tons of cool amenities. It's a great alternative for sim racing heads who are looking for something a little off the beaten track.

APPEAL: Off-road fans unimpressed with previous off-road games. Sim racers who aren't put off by a substantial learning curve and a new way to drive.

PROS: Amazing vehicle physics and dynamics; lovely foreground texturing that conveys speed and direction; great track designer; PC off-roading has never felt this real.

CONS: Marginally jagged graphics; annoyingly insignificant crash indicators; vehicles in extreme close proximity can appear to "merge."

CG RATED

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Pair of Jacks

Fewer Diamonds, More Clubs in the Latest Hand From Berkeley

by Charles Ardai

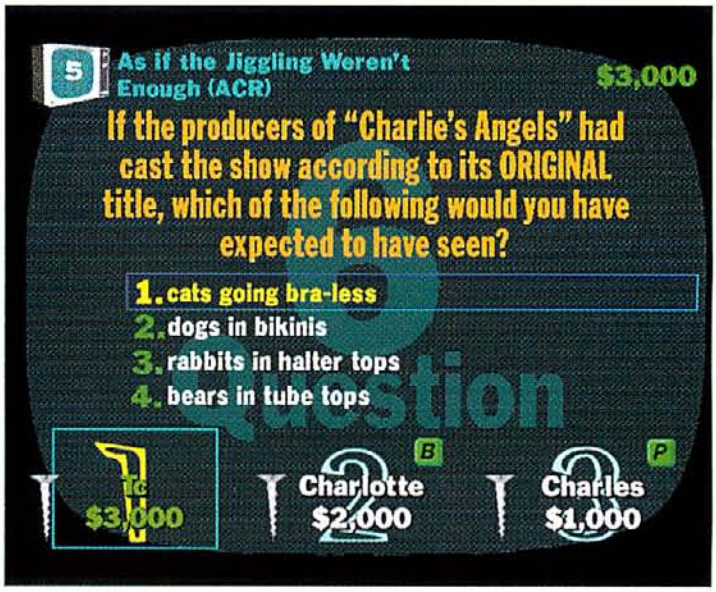
Although both start with "f" and end with "ier," any third-grader can tell you that "fancier" and "funnier" aren't synonyms. This is why it's a little disappointing to see the very talented folks at Berkeley Systems assuming that making a game fancier automatically makes it funnier, as well.

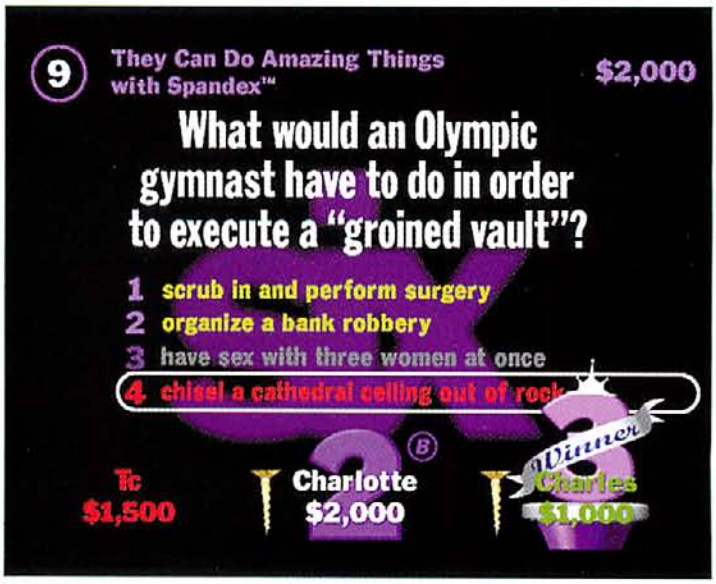
The YOU DON'T KNOW JACK games (of which YOU DON'T KNOW JACK 3 and YOU DON'T KNOW JACK TV are numbers five and six) have never been very fancy, but they've always been incredibly, wickedly, naughtily, and uproariously funny. Now come the latest installments, and all of a sudden everything's fancier: The visuals are still almost all text, but now the text scrolls and spirals and flows and swooshes on and off the screen; now a right answer causes the player's numeral to be showered with dollar bills or celebrated with fireworks, while a wrong answer causes the number to be crushed under a falling anvil. But funnier it isn't. Indeed, the wit that has always been the hallmark of this sterling series suddenly seems somehow...strained. Can it be that after writing something around 50,000 smart-alecky trivia questions and silly gag answers, the writers are beginning to run out of ideas?

I DON'T KNOW, JACK

Another possibility is that the audience is simply becoming bored with JACK. I know that after watching *Jeopardy* every night for a week, I greet a new episode with somewhat less enthusiasm than I do when I've been away from my TV for a while. Computer gamers have been getting a steady diet of JACK for about two years now; one could hardly blame them if they were getting a little tired of it. Was Shakespeare writing about JACK when he said, "Play on...give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, the appetite may sicken, and so die...Enough; no more; 'tis not so sweet now as it was before"? Well, not really, but he might as well have been.

What's there to tire of? Cheeky innuendo, for one thing. Sexual double entendres need not be sophisticated,





FROM SPANDEX TO PLAYTEX Both games are risqué, but you'll find JACK 3 funnier than JACK TV.





Price: $29.99 (each)
System Requirements: 486/66, Windows 3.1 or better, 16MB RAM, 28MB hard-drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD ROM; supports Windows-compatible sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Hotseat (1–3 players).
Designer: Jellyvision
Publisher: Berkeley Systems
Berkeley, CA
(510) 540-5535
www.berkeleysystems.com

but they do need to be pulled off with a certain elegance—otherwise, you're really dealing with single entendre, as in JACK 3's new "Three Way" questions, with their orgasmic background sounds ("Oh, yes!") and forced sex gags ("Looks like we've reached our climax"). Cross-out gags are also getting tiring: All the JACK games end with parody commercials, but where the first game had some brilliant satiric gems (two years later, I still chuckle over the "Health food store boy doll" jingle), JACK 3 and JACK TV club you over the head with ads for a "urination pad for men," a TV special called *When Dogs Sniff Crotches 2*, and a food product called "Splat: Spreadable Lips, Anuses, and Teats."

Am I selecting the most extreme examples? Of course I am, and I don't want to be unfair. The average level of the humor is not quite as low as these examples might suggest, though JACK 3 comes off much better—and funnier—in this regard than does JACK TV.

DIS OR DAT?

Gameplay is the same as in previous installments. For the handful of you who have never played JACK, this means that a snide offscreen host reads multiple-choice questions out loud and one, two, or three players race to buzz in and select answers. Players win points for answering correctly and lose points for making mistakes. Play is divided into three rounds, including a finale (the "Jack Attack") in which you have to match pairs of clues that embody some special relationship. Periodically, unusual types of questions crop up, including "Dis or Dat" questions, in which you have to indicate into which of two categories a series of clues falls ("Dangerous gas or shampoo?"); "Impossible Questions," in which you have to guess at a piece of information you couldn't possibly know ("How many dollars did *Smokey and the Bandit* gross by 1993?"); and the ever-popular "Gibberish Questions," in which you have to translate a meaningless phrase into the familiar phrase with which it rhymes.

Questions can be on any topic in JACK 3; in JACK TV, all the questions are about television shows, with a particular emphasis on cheesy genre shows and sitcoms of the 1970s. Your success at the latter will be greater if you know that the Bionic Woman was a tennis pro before she became bionic and that Archie Bunker once called Twinkies "WASP soul food." But, as with JACK SPORTS (in which most of the questions could be enjoyed by people who were not sports fanatics), JACK TV is not particularly nasty or relentless in the minutiae it asks you to recall.

JACK TV has a different host from JACK 3, and the change is anything but an improvement. His voice is more grating and his jokes are noticeably lame. (After a question about Trapper John's surgeon sidekick, Gonzo, the announcer quips "A Muppet doing surgery. Oh, man, I can see the malpractice suit from here." After a question about the eagle on Wonder Woman's costume, he wryly says: "I stared at her chest plenty and I never noticed no eagle.")

To be fair, some of the animation sequences that introduce each question in JACK TV include very funny parodies of TV theme songs and catchphrases: a Herve Villechaize imitator shouting "Thir-Teen! Thir-Teen!" à la *Fantasy Island*, for instance.

In a world that had never known JACK, both JACK 3 and JACK TV would probably be hailed as successes. Alas, we know (and we've played) better. JACK 3 is the more inspired of the two games, and is well worth the purchase despite being overproduced. JACK TV has its moments, but if you're expecting another change of pace—such as with JACK MOVIES—you'll likely be disappointed. Maybe by the time JACK 4 rolls around, the writers will have some fresh ideas. We can only hope.

You Don't Know (Union) Jack



Anglophiles, keep your eyes peeled for the UK version of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK, a hilarious adaptation of Berkeley Systems' original game. Translated into the Queen's English for the benefit of our fair cousins across the pond, the questions cover every great British institution from *Are You Being Served?* to *Absolutely Fabulous*, with a healthy dose of Beatlemania thrown in.

While a knowledge of both Cockney rhyming slang and British soap opera characters would certainly fare you well in this game, even un-Anglicized Yanks should be able to hold their own, as many of the questions are general knowledge. The main difference is that the smart-mouthed announcer, Jack Cake, and the rest of his cronies all have jolly old British accents. But the prudish be warned: Much of the language is even more risqué than in any of the American versions—you know what a bawdy lot those Brits are!

—Charlotte Panther

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK 3

APPEAL: For those who enjoyed the first YOU DON'T KNOW JACK.

PROS: Hundreds of new questions and answers, presented in that irresistibly silly and sassy JACK style; snazzy new graphics.

CONS: Not quite as funny or clever as JACK or JACK 2; the writers and the audience may be getting a little tired by now.

CG RATED ★★★★

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK TV

APPEAL: For JACK addicts who must have the entire collection.

PROS: A new angle from the more general JACK trivia; some of the animation is neat.

CONS: Nowhere near the send-up of pop culture in JACK MOVIES; the graphics are often lacklustre; where's our favorite host?

CG RATED ★½

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Pick a Card

by Barry Brenesal



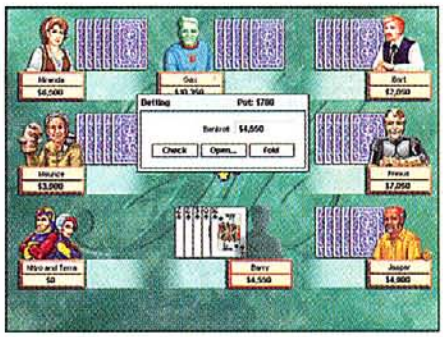


Now that the holidays have passed, you may be wondering what to do with that leftover fruitcake from Aunt Ida. You might feel the same about the perennial gaggle of parlor games ported to the PC. It's not that HOYLE CLASSIC CARD GAMES lacks the usual Sierra polish, it's just that there isn't much else here.

Gone are the computer-driven opponents drawn from Sierra's past graphics adventures. (I miss Baba Yaga.) They've been replaced by a slate of new figures—from a lawyer named Langley to an anthropomorphized robot named Primus. You'll find a spate of familiar card games among the 12 game selections in the package. But computer versions of Bridge and Poker have been done far better elsewhere, and there are a number of good shareware versions of Hearts available on the Internet—for a lot less money.

Of course, the real fun of card games comes from social interaction; that's why Aunt Ida dons her green visor and plays poker with the boys every Tuesday night. This multiplayer camaraderie is completely missing from the HOYLE CLASSIC CARD GAMES. Attempts to simulate this interaction backfire—after a character responds with identically inflected remarks the 15th time, you begin to feel as if your nose is being shoved inside the desiccated programming code of the game.

You may not want to offend your Aunt Ida by sending back that fruitcake, but you can certainly turn down this half-baked fruitcake of a game. CG



CARD SHARKS These computer players look unique, but their canned responses quickly wear thin.

APPEAL: For those who feel shuffling real cards takes too much energy.

PROS: Simple interface; familiar games; nice documentation.

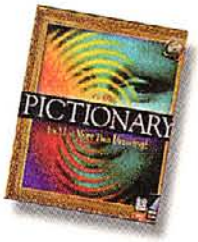
CONS: There are much better computer card games for the price.

CG RATED

Price: $29.95
System Requirements: 486/66, Windows 3.1 or better, 8MB RAM, 6MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Windows-compatible sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Only through Sierra Internet Gaming Service (2–4 players); 1 CD per player.
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Bellevue, WA
(800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Drawing a Blank

by Charlotte Panther

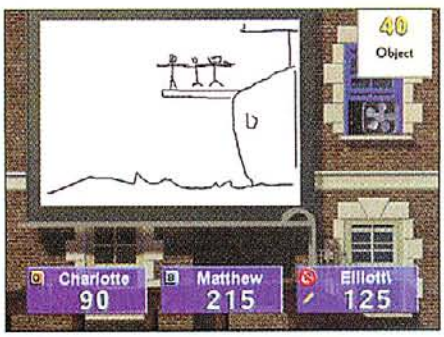




As I am a huge fan of the *Pictionary* board game, I was eagerly awaiting Hasbro's digital version. Despite the participation of the original designers, however, PICTIONARY does not come close to the standard of its pencil-and-paper cousin. The game is played via six categories, four of which involve figuring out what the computer is drawing, or guessing at a hidden image before all of its parts are revealed. There's also a fast-buzzer round, during which you must match up words and pictures as they glide past you on a conveyor belt.

Most of the games require you to buzz in and type the first three letters of the answer—if you're correct, the rest of the word will register automatically. With the phrase "ear to the ground," for example, I typed "ear" and the game credited me with getting the whole phrase correct. This feature removes all the tension that arises from getting some of the clue right and struggling to figure out the whole thing—which is an intrinsic part of what made the original *Pictionary* fun.

In general, the games in PICTIONARY are fairly unremarkable. Only *You Draw*—where you must draw pictures using your mouse as a pencil—is really reminiscent of the original. Watching friends' attempts to draw masterpieces with the mouse had its moments, but I found myself missing the boardgame. Some classics are better enjoyed in their original incarnation. CG



WALKING THE PLANK The most amusing part of PICTIONARY comes from watching your friends compose their crazy creations with the mouse.

APPEAL: Only for those who assume that digital must be better than paper.

PROS: Watching friends drawing pathetic pictures with the mouse will make you chuckle.

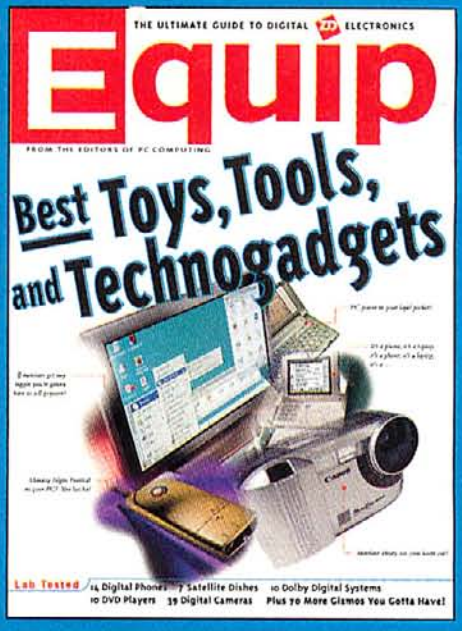
CONS: Too easy; only one of the six games resembles the boardgame.

CG RATED

Price: $29.99
System Requirements: 486/66, Windows 95, 12MB RAM, 40MB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM; supports Windows-compatible sound cards.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer support: 1–3 individual players or two teams; Internet, LAN, or Hotseat; 1 CD per player.
Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Beverly, Massachusetts
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Going Underground



Zork Grand Inquisitor Is a Humorous Journey Through Adventure Gaming's Past

ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR is the latest revival in the ZORK series from Activision. Once again, we visit the Great Underground Empire (or what's left of it), including nostalgic stops at Flood Control Dam #3 and the legendary White House. This isn't just a trip down memory lane, of course; there is also a nefarious plot to foil.

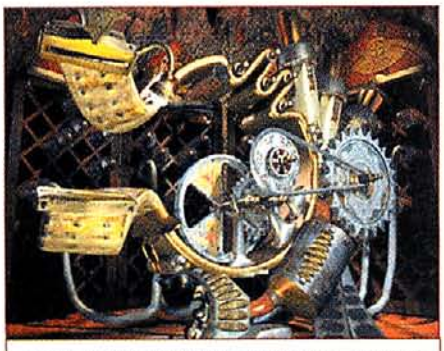
The Inquisitor (of the title) is behind it all. His goal is to completely eradicate magic, while at the same time ensure that the population bows in total, mind-numbing obedience to his orders. He is, obviously, not a nice guy.

While the game begins in Port Foozle, you quickly end up in the G.U.E., where most of the action takes place. It's here that you find the last bit of magical power and use it, plus your wits, to stop the Inquisitor before his plans come to fruition.



DAM IT Harking back all the way to ZORK I, you'll have to figure out the controls to Flood Control Dam #3 as you make your way through ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR.

You must bring magic back into the world by retrieving three potent artifacts: the fabled Coconut of Quendor, the Cube of Foundation, and the Skull of Yoruck (not to be found in just any old hamlet). In other words, it's the usual hero's quest stuff.



SPELL RELIEF The G.U.E. spellchecker—no mage should be without one.

HELL TO PAY

You don't go this one alone; there are companions of sorts to help you along. One is the spirit of the last Dungeon Master, who currently resides in the famous brass lantern. Three other spirits trapped in totems (a form of punishment) also provide assistance, along with Antharia Jack, a grand TV hero.

Over the course of the game, you pay a visit to Hades, meet a two-headed Cerberus (even Hell is downsizing these days), traipse through time tunnels, ride the G.U.E. subway, spend some time in a dragon's mouth, and perform a daring jail break, among other feats.

The mood here is definitely light, and while the underlying threat is, of course, serious, ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR is played for laughs. There are send-ups and takeoffs on standard adventure fare, and other things as well. If Antharia Jack seems somehow suspiciously familiar, that's deliberate. He may not have raided any arks or found any grails, but you probably know him.

In tandem with the humor, the puzzles are fairly easy to solve. Where the previous game, ZORK NEMESIS, had a lot of tough nuts to crack, ZGI's posers often have obvious answers. While there were some tricky parts, I was a bit surprised at how quickly the game was

> **"The game is a lighthearted romp, full of humor and wicked little jabs at adventuring."**



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit 640x480 graphics with a VESA local bus or PCI video card with 1MB RAM, Sound Blaster 16–compatible sound card, mouse. 28.8Kbps modem for multiplayer option.
3D Support: None.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, LAN, or Internet (2 players); 1CD per player.
Designer/Publisher: Activision
Santa Monica, CA
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com

finished, even though there is much for you to do.

As with most adventure games these days, the interface is simple. When you move the cursor over an interactive object—a lever to pull, a button to push, or a door to open—you click the mouse to perform the appropriate action. When the cursor is over an item you can take, the arrow becomes a hand; and you pick up the item by clicking. You can then try using it on something else, or you can put it into your inventory bag. You access the bag in one of two ways: Use a hot key (F5), which displays everything you're carrying, or move the cursor to the top left of the screen, which opens a sliding bar displaying the first 16 items you have in the bag.

Spells are handled the same way: You can open the spellbook from inside the inventory bag or move the cursor to the top right to open a slide bar with symbols representing the spells in your book. Clicking a symbol readies the spell for casting. The spells you learn, by the way, are automatically written in the book as you find them.

Movement is similar to that in ZORK NEMESIS: while you can rotate 360 degrees or look up and down (sometimes), you can move only in certain predetermined directions.

The game contains no automap; the closest thing to one is a magical map that works with the teleport machines scattered around the G.U.E. Once you have visited a main location (such as the Dungeon Master's Lair or G.U.E. Tech), it appears on the map. Insert the map in a teleporter and choose a destination, and you're taken there instantly. That's more than sufficient. Although the main areas usually have several rooms each, the locations are small and you can't become lost or confused. The G.U.E. is a rather compact place.

YOUR TURN?

ZGI is presented in a letterbox style, and when it comes to graphics, the game is quite good. The middle portion of the screen is the main display; the top (controls and scroll bars) and bottom (text display) portions are black.

Speaking of text, the game has complete subtitles. You can play with sound or sound and text. That includes the FMVs that run from time to time during the game—a thoughtful touch. It's good to see that ZORK hasn't forgotten its roots.

Interestingly, ZGI supports multiplay for two people via LAN, Internet, or modem connections. The play is, of course, cooperative, since GRAND INQUISITOR isn't exactly a shooter. Sorry to say, I didn't have the chance to try this feature, so I can't tell you how well it works (although my editors tell me that it's less than stellar). Also, the multiplayer software that comes with the game is labeled as a beta version, so you may want to stop by Activision's Web site (**www.activision.com**) to check for updates before trying this yourself.

The game itself, though, ran beautifully throughout, with no crashes, freezes, lockups, or other oddities. It all went very smoothly, including the FMVs. You do need DirectX 5.0, and it's included (along with a number of updated sound and video drivers) on the CD. The installation of DirectX and the new drivers for my cards proved to be quick and trouble-free.

The acting and voice-overs are very good. Dirk Benedict (as Antharia Jack) is a standout; he's amazing as an ersatz Indiana Jones. The advantage of doing a humorous game is that actors can ham it up, and you can be sure that everyone takes advantage of the opportunity here. While the use of live actors in games often comes off poorly, in this case, it works out well.



YOUR MOVE? Don't worry—this is not an outtake from THE 7TH GUEST. Think of what you've ever felt like doing with an adventure game chess puzzle, and act accordingly.

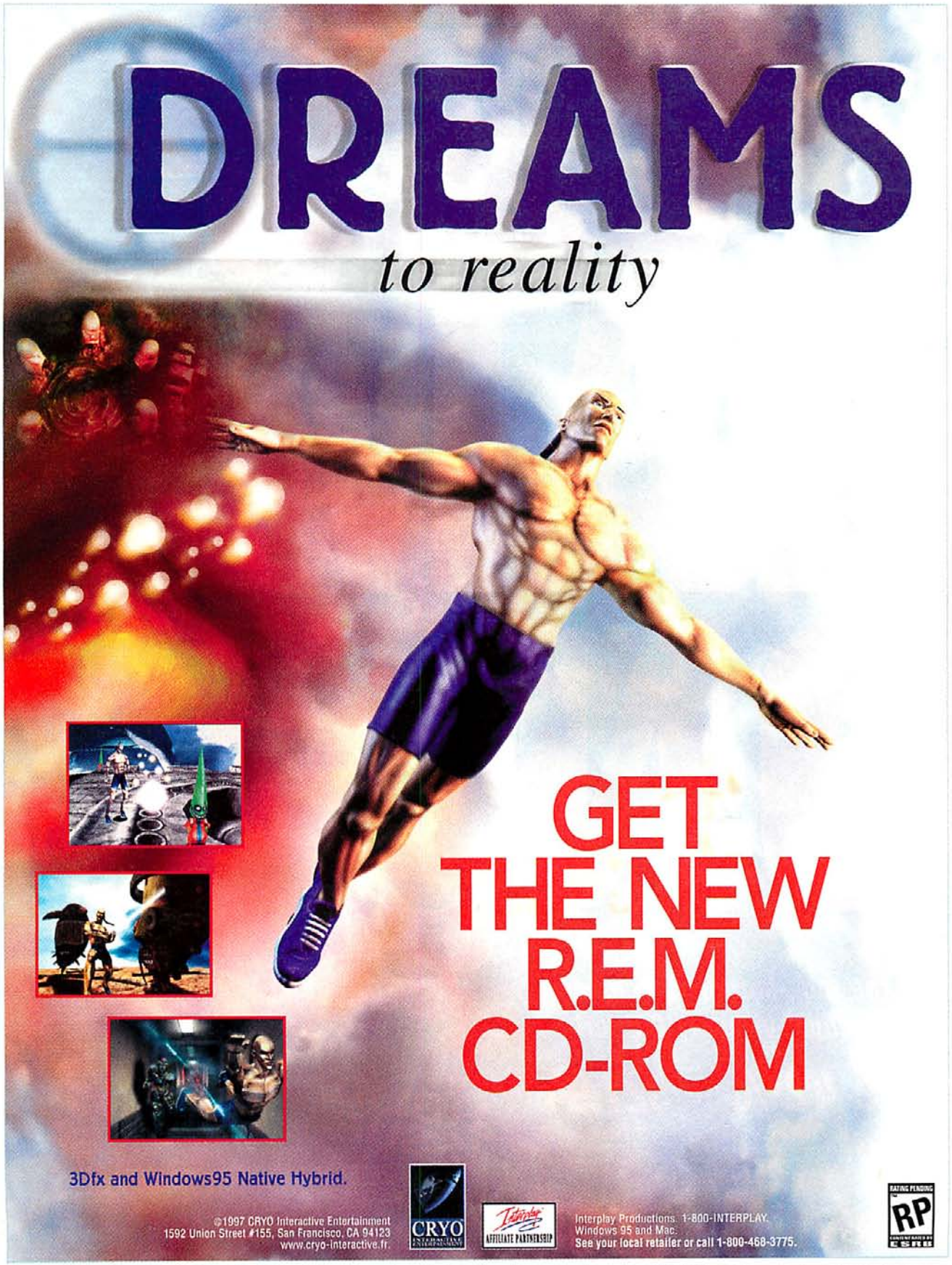


OPEN HOUSE The White House, one of computer gaming's most famous landmarks, makes a return appearance in ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR.

YOU HAVE DIED

The downsides to the game are that it goes too quickly and the puzzles are just a little too simple most of the time. I suppose this is a reaction to complaints that NEMESIS was overly difficult. In correcting for that, however, Activision went a bit too far in the other direction.

Overall, ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR is a lighthearted romp, full of humor and wicked little jabs at adventuring. While it's a little too short and a little too easy, the game is nonetheless fun for both veterans and novices alike.



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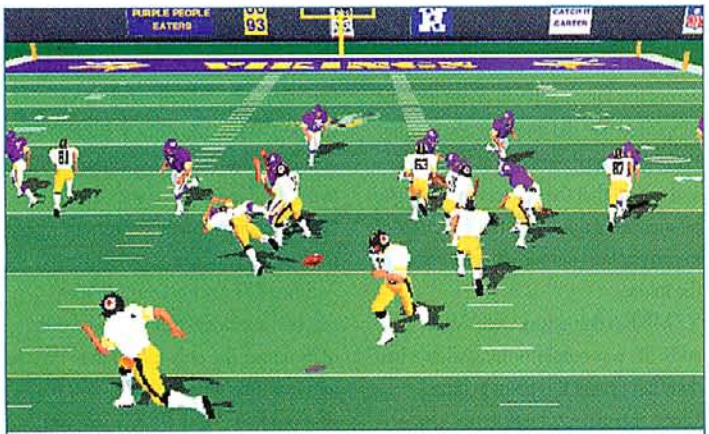
The news hit me like a Reggie White sack. There I am, enjoying MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL 98 as much as any sports game I've played all year. Even after sending my review to *CGW* Sports Editor Jeff Green for the monthly red pen therapy, I can't seem to put MNF aside. I realize I'm hooked because I've even signed up with an Internet league, something I almost never find time for. In the league, I'm coaching the Eagles and loving it, despite weekly poundings by online opponents who take sadistic pleasure in my red-zone blues.

And then one day I'm cruising the newsgroups, where I stumble across an anonymous message claiming that MNF 98 has been orphaned, and the staff pink-slipped. Could Disney, the original corporate cash cow, really have pulled the plug on a promising company such as OT Sports?

No way, I think. The game is great. It has the tie-in with the popular Gifford-Dierdorf-Michaels prime-time NFL coverage. And gauging from the Net traffic, sales are way up from the game's lukewarm debut in 1996. Besides, we've been through this before with Usenet impostors claiming the inside scoop.

THE BLOODY TRUTH

The next day, however, MNF designer Doug Whatley's wife posted a follow-up indicating that OT Sports was indeed bleeding out, but that the game would be supported through the end of the season. Say it ain't so! Appearing on the scene just as the LEGENDS 98 debacle was leaving sports gamers squealing like Ned Beatty in *Deliverance*, MNF 98 filled a major void in this year's football lineup. After all, a good-looking NFL game with realistic strategy options, a dirt-simple play-calling interface, and smooth Internet play is nothing to sneeze at. So what has Mickey been smoking lately?



FOUR AND OUT? MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL 98's strong sales and better reviews may help keep it afloat despite OT Sports' demise.

Despite a round of layoffs that left a skeleton crew in charge at OT Sports, General Manager Deborah Wahler remains upbeat.

"This was primarily a decision by Disney Interactive," Wahler says. "They took a look at their business and decided their core competencies were not necessarily in sports.

"Without critical mass in this business it's very hard to compete," Wahler laments. "EA owns the sports category. Strategically we were a very small business entity—30 people—and far removed from where Disney's resource base could help us. A lot of businesses reevaluate. I think Disney reevaluated."

Despite the sacking of OT Sports, Wahler gives assurances that Disney will continue to support MNF 98 and its college cousin, HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON, through their natural life cycle. She also confirmed that INDY RACING would be released as planned in time for the Christmas shopping season, where it will be going wheel-to-wheel with Microsoft's CART PRECISION RACING.

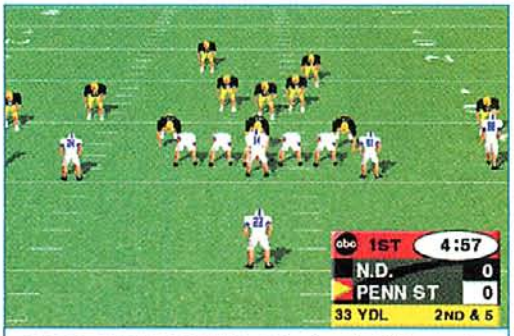
> **"Is this the end of OT Sports as we know it? Unfortunately, yes."**

BARELY BREATHING

So, is this the end of OT Sports as we know it? Unfortunately, yes.

"As far as Disney is concerned it is the end of OT as an entity," Wahler confirms. "There are some things that may happen for it to survive, but not under Disney ownership. If Disney decides to sell its assets then OT Sports may indeed live." (The assets Wahler refers to include the MNF 98 game engine, the INDY RACING engine, and related trademarks.)

Meanwhile, at OT Sports' Hunt Valley, Maryland offices, a small, hand-picked team—including MNF designer Doug Whatley and producer Russell



FORGOTTEN HEROES OT Sports' college football game is a decent variation on the MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL engine, but, due to a lack of support, it has barely registered in the polls.

Clark—remain behind to complete INDY RACING and provide support for MNF and HEROES. A transition team from Disney is also in place.

What's next for talented sports game designer Doug Whatley? He was responsible for the underrated ULTIMATE FOOTBALL series while at MicroProse, and historically has been the most accessible of sports game personas, readily available to gamers' gripes and questions. Deborah Wahler predicts a bright future for MNF 98's creator.

"Doug and Russell Clark are so talented that they really can determine their own fate. A lot of people see ownership as an interesting way to go. I believe Doug's probably thinking in those terms. He's got a great rep, and he's been around football and had some nice success."

Okay, so OT Sports is dead in the water. What about MNF 98, a game that really came of age this season? Is it destined to become computer gaming's version of the athlete dying young?

"I really don't know," Wahler says. "In the interactive business the first year is really tough. By year two you've worked out a lot of the kinks. You get a better product, and it just improves from there. I think ABC and Disney both agree that, as a franchise, *Monday Night Football* is preeminent, whether it's on the air or on your sweatshirt or on your computer. I don't think they'll walk away from it."

GO IT ALONE?

Other sources close to the OT Sports situation speculate that Whatley might attempt to purchase the rights to the game from Disney and continue the franchise independently. This might not be a bad deal, since the game is gaining a popular following. Wahler points to figures indicating that MNF 98 sales were up 65 percent over last year's version in the first two weeks. She also pointed out that the MNF gaming lobby on Mplayer has been quite active.

Pat Vance, a vice president at ABC Interactive, remains supportive of the OT Sports line of games and, like Wahler, frames the unfortunate situation in economic terms.

"There's consolidation going on here as there is all across the industry," Vance says. "We have three very strong sports games this fall, which will continue to be supported. We did do some downsizing. We're gauging the market at this point, and expect that the products are going to be successful this Christmas. We expect to carry at least certain games forward in the future.

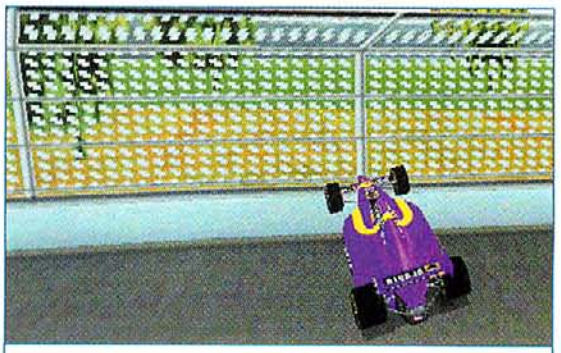
"MNF is doing very well," Vance adds. "It's way outperforming what it had done last year at this point in time." Vance also expects HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON to be a solid contender among college fans, and looks for a keen competition between INDY RACING and Microsoft's racing sim. As for MNF, Vance expects it to survive the financial mousetrap that snared OT Sports.

"If MNF is successful this year," Vance says, "I don't think there's any question that it will be back. There's absolutely no reason to keep it away. We have a very solid engine, and if the market receives it well, there's no reason to hold it off."

SCROOGE MCDUCK

As one might imagine, the OT Sports situation has spawned some hard feelings. One former staffer slams Disney Interactive for major cost overruns on its edutainment products—overruns that necessitated the very cost-cutting measures that proved fatal to OT Sports. A lack of gamers in key management positions at Disney Interactive is another criticism leveled in the wake of OT's demise.

"Disney doesn't understand the unique quality of interactive entertainment," our source remarks pointedly. "And they don't want to spend money in a market they don't understand."



WIPEOUT! This unfortunate scene from INDY RACING serves as a sad metaphor for the fate of the game's developer, OT Sports.

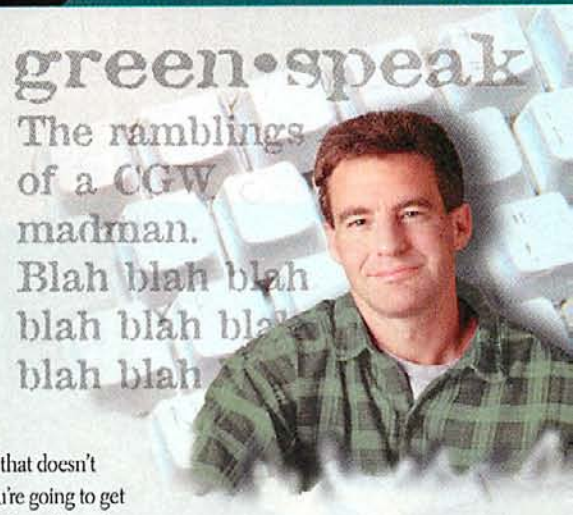
Perhaps the most bitter pill for members of the ABC Interactive and OT Sports teams to swallow was the timing of Disney's decision. The ax fell in late September, shortly after MNF shipped. While the game was garnering accolades from users and earning positive critical reviews (4.5 stars in *CGW*), OT Sports was simultaneously laying off most of its employees.

Since OT Sports seems to have reached a sudden-death finale worthy of its name, the only thing left to do is to join in a little ditty in honor of its flagship product, MNF 98. C'mon, you know the words:

M-I-C…See you real soon! (we hope)
K-E-Y…Why? Because we LIKE you!

Money for Nothing

Or, Why the PGL Heralds the End of the World



First off, I must admit that I have watched beach volleyball on television. The reasons, I think, are obvious. I bring this up only because the *Los Angeles Times*, a fine metropolitan newspaper, saw fit in a recent article to compare niche sports like beach volleyball with the brand-new Professional Gamers' League (PGL), a harebrained scheme by Total Entertainment Network (TEN) to turn gaming into some kind of "professional" sport, complete with product endorsements and trading cards. The PGL already has its Michael Jordan in Dennis "Thresh" Fong, a 20-year-old who has garnered media attention, won a Ferrari, and now has an agent, all because he kicks butt in QUAKE.

But I don't know. Sure, it sounds great, and I guess I'd take that Ferrari over my dented 1990 Nissan with the unidentifiable brown stain on the passenger seat. Still, I just can't help feeling that—with all due respect to the hard-working people putting it together—the PGL is one huge case of wishful thinking. Sort of like my fantasy of John Tesh spontaneously combusting.

■■■

Now I'm not opposed to gaming tournaments. Nor am I opposed to making money from gaming. In fact, I hope that Ziff-Davis someday pays the *CGW* editors enough so that I, too, can say I "make money" from gaming.

But there's a huge difference between watching professional athletes perform feats of athletic prowess and watching a bunch of zombied-out, bug-eyed gamers frag each other to death. Who do they think would actually be interested in watching this stuff, buying PGL T-shirts, or (and this is truly pathetic) swapping PGL trading cards?

I know it seems as if people will pay money for anything. Lots of people attend tractor pulls and the Ice Capades and professional bowling tournaments—and that's fine. You won't see me making any snobbish put-downs about the hayseeds and yokels who spend their money on that cultural backwash. I know it's also true that gamers tend to be easily suckered into spending lots of cash on really stupid, money-wasting stuff. But even those of us who own plastic Ferengi ears (hi Denny!) will attest to having some semblance of pride. And paying to watch other people play QUAKE is a line that we as a species cannot afford to cross.

■■■

Finally—and maybe this is just the dad in me speaking—it seems to me that even worse than the cultural implications is the nightmarish idea that some impressionable young gamer is going to look at this league and think that gaming could actually be a wise career choice.

Look, kids, let me give it to you straight: If you're even remotely thinking about quitting school to "be like Thresh" and become a "professional gamer," I suggest you shine a flashlight in your ear and see if any light comes out the other side. Because, to put it in terms you might understand, you're a few damage points shy of a frag.

Yes, Thresh won a Ferrari. Yes, he did it by playing QUAKE. Yes, he has an agent now. But that doesn't mean you're going to get the same kind of break, no matter how big a badass you are. Chances are you'll just get carpal tunnel syndrome, a bad back, and a lifelong addiction to Taco Bell.

And don't kid yourself into thinking that you're missing out on some sort of glamorous lifestyle, either. As someone who's on the inside, let me tell you, the gaming life is not all just good times, parties, and multiplayer naked DIABLO with Tia Carrere. Believe me, that gets old really fast, and Tia is insufferably whiny when she gets low on mana.

Try this vision on for size instead: You, alone in your apartment, your hairy gut flopping out of your macaroni-and-cheese-stained DOOM II T-shirt, shouting, "I'm the King of QUAKE!" while the repo guys haul away your furniture. And your girlfriend? Well, fragmaster, guess what: She just drove off in a Porsche 911 with her new boyfriend—the one with the education and the job and the bulging stock portfolio.

Get the picture? Good. The Professional Gamers' League is not for you. Get it out of your head. When you say PGL to me, let me retranslate it for you as follows: Please Get a Life.

Now you kids get outta here and go do your homework. I'm busy playing QUAKE II here. Papa's got a Ferrari to win.

What Jeff doesn't realize is that, beginning next month, CGW will be switching its focus to cover other forms of popular entertainment. You can email our new tractor pull and Ice Capades editor at jhgreen@zd.com.

> **"The gaming life is not all just good times, parties, and multiplayer naked DIABLO with Tia Carrere. Believe me, that gets old really fast."**

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Going for the Gold

Updated Versions Breathe New Life Into Older Sims

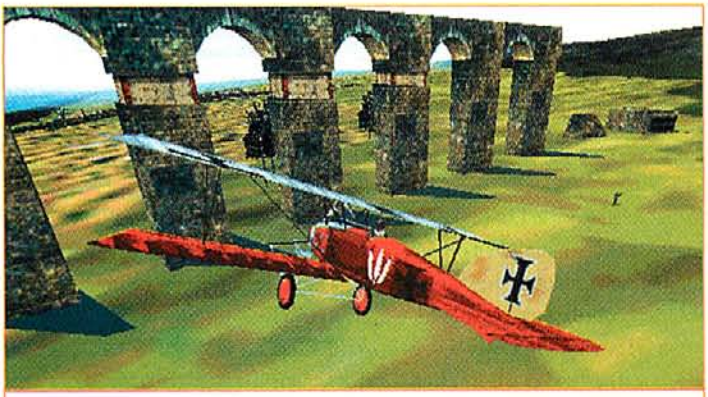


It's been years since I've seen a significant flight simulator that didn't get at least one patch after its release. At times, the need for patches is inexcusable. For example, many developers rush products out the door—knowing that the games contain major problems—in order to release before the holiday sales season or the end of a financial quarter. Other games need patches because the developers skimped on the testing budget and didn't test the games with common system configurations or a popular 3D card. It's a shame how many programs are released in poor shape because of shortsighted, bean-counter decisions.

But sometimes a company will modify a program to extend its life and add new capabilities in order to keep the game interesting for veteran gamers while making it attractive for newcomers. For some titles, such as U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS 97, these updates are sold as a new version of the program, with a cost-reduced upgrade or rebate available for purchasers of the original version. This is also the case for major updates of FLYING CORPS GOLD and JETFIGHTER III PLATINUM EDITION. But in both of these cases, the developers went a step further: They also released many of the enhancements of the newer versions as free patches for purchasers of the original programs. These are the kinds of patches gamers like to see.

DIGGING GOLD

Since its release, FLYING CORPS has seen a number of enhancements, including Direct3D graphics and, more recently, multiplayer support. For some reason, these patches weren't available at press time from publisher Empire's Web site **(www.empire-us.com)**, but you can get them from the game's developer, Rowan, at **www.cix.co.uk/~rowan** or **ftp://ftp.u-net.com/com/rowan/**.



LOW AND SLOW Low-level flight is smoother and a lot better looking with the FLYING CORPS 3D update.

Of course, the most noticeable enhancement to FLYING CORPS is its new support for 3D graphics. When FLYING CORPS was released last year, you had to run the DOS version to get decent frame-rates at higher graphics resolutions. With the new 3D support, it's possible to maintain about 30 frames per second in 640x480 mode on a Pentium 166. If you have a faster system and a 3D card with a big enough frame buffer (such as the RIVA 128), you can get satisfactory performance even at 800x600 resolution.

In addition to being faster, the graphics look better as well. FLYING CORPS now uses 16-bit color, which makes haze and other effects more impressive, and the game supports bilinear filtering to smooth out ground textures at low altitude. Note that you'll need a high-end 3D card to take advantage of the 3D mode. It looks and works great on Rendition V2200-, 3Dfx Voodoo-, and NVIDIA RIVA 128-based cards, but won't function on an ATI All-in-Wonder or S3 Virge-based Diamond Stealth card.

> **"Support for Voodoo graphics gives JETFIGHTER III a completely different feel."**

Also new is a multiplayer mode, but the developers weren't as successful with this implementation. While it works well on a LAN or via a direct modem dialup, I was unsuccessful connecting using the Internet TCP/IP support or KALI. Apparently, you can play online using Wireplay, a non-Internet multiplayer service that is offered in the UK and is currently being launched in the U.S. by MCI. Rowan

▸▸▸Continued on pg 247

STRATEGY & TIPS

Longbow 2

Helicopter Survival Guide, Part 1: Flight Tactics

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

by Tom "KC" Basham

You've undoubtedly heard the clichés about helicopters. Things like, "they don't fly, they beat the air into submission," aren't far from truth. Helicopter flight, which requires excellent coordination and immense concentration, is difficult enough, let alone when you try to navigate in the dark with people shooting at you. Fortunately, there are things you can do to maximize your combat proficiency.



SPEED RACER Burying the nose results in sudden, unwanted acceleration.

Unsafe at Any Speed

While coffee-table books and cable TV programs may proclaim that the AH-64 Longbow Apache can move well over 180mph, such high speeds cause problems. Low altitude flight at breakneck speed is more dangerous, the enemy can more easily detect you, and it's harder to use terrain masking. If you're running for your life, speed is good. In most cases, though, there's no good reason to ever take an Apache above 60 knots or so.

SEE THE CGW REVIEW

The most common way to gain unwanted speed in LONGBOW 2 is to let your nose get buried. Pointing the nose downward tilts the disc of the rotor blades, which points the thrust back, causing the helicopter to accelerate. If not properly trimmed, the nose of the simulated AH-64 tends to slowly sink below the horizon. If I'm not paying close attention, the nose can drop several degrees and the helicopter can pick up 30 or 40 extra knots of speed before I notice. It's also easy for sim jocks transitioning from fixed-wing aircraft to let the nose drop—or sometimes push it down intentionally—when crossing ridges. If you work the collective properly, you can ascend, crest the ridge, and descend on the other side with few adjustments to your flight attitude. Once you've picked up unwanted speed, you've got problems. LONGBOW 2's aircraft don't scrub off speed as quickly as their real-world counterparts. Although the simulated choppers pick up speed quickly with the nose below the horizon, they don't want to slow down after raising the nose an equal distance above the horizon.

The best way to get rid of unwanted speed is to pay close attention to the machine and never let the speed build up in the first place. If you find yourself zipping along at 90 knots, you'll have to do some aggressive maneuvering to scrub off that extra speed. Pitch the nose up very high, well above the horizon. In some cases, if I find myself moving unreasonably fast, I'll pitch the nose up and apply collective. Increasing collective increases thrust, which is diverted forward because the nose is pulled above the horizon. The extra thrust helps slow the helicopter down, but will also cause it to climb. (And we all know that altitude is a bad thing when flying gunships.) If you lower the collective, you'll descend, but you won't decelerate as fast.



RIDGE RUNNING Flying along the top of the ridge provides a quick escape route into the next valley.

Three-Ring Circus

Helicopters can execute a variety of maneuvers, including flying backward and sideways. These aren't merely stunts designed to awe airshow crowds. Instead, such antics form a crucial part of helicopter warfare. If you can't fly sideways, you'll never be able to fully employ terrain masking. If you can't use terrain masking, you won't last long on the simulated battlefield.

Sideways flight isn't that difficult. To practice, start any mission. Gently lift off into a hover. Using the pedals, yaw the aircraft until it faces a fixed structure (a building, a tent, or the like). Move toward that structure until you're only a few hundred feet away, then re-enter a hover. To slip to the left, gently push the cyclic (that is, the stick) to the left. You'll probably have to add a little collective to prevent your helicopter from descending. The building will appear to slide to the right as you slip left.

If you have some forward motion, side flight becomes a little more involved. If the helicopter starts turning, you have to compensate with the pedals. Suppose you're behind a hill. You want to slide left, unmask, shoot the targets, and then run for home. As you slide left, you want to keep the nose pointed toward the enemy so you can fire your weapons as quickly as possible. If the nose begins to bank around either direction, simply apply the opposite pedal. The nose will swing back to the original bearing.



HIT THE BRAKES Since the simulated AH-64 doesn't bleed speed very well, be sure to pull the nose well above the horizon to decelerate.

Over Hill, Over Dale

We all know that attack helicopters rely on terrain masking, the act of placing terrain features between you and the enemy. A cooperative hill, mountain, or even tree can keep you alive simply by blocking the enemy's view. In most cases, the enemy can't shoot what he can't see. Therefore, when transiting rough terrain, it would seem logical to use the geography to its fullest potential and fly along the bottom of the valleys. The canyon walls form a nearly impregnable barrier of defense, right? Not exactly.

Suppose you're flying over very rough terrain toward a particular target. The numerous hills and ridges provide several green and inviting valleys to choose from. If you're like me, it won't matter how good the initial reports are, whichever valley you choose will be overflowing with enemy forces. You'll come around some bend to find yourself deluged with shoulder-launched SAMs and AAA. If you're flying along the floor right down the center of the canyon and find yourself in this situation, you might as well be in the middle of a Kansas wheat field. You're stuck in absolutely the least protected spot within the valley.

Real-world AH-64 pilots are taught to fly along the top of a ridge, just below the ridge line. A few feet of mountain blocks sight just as well as several hundred, with an extra benefit: If the current valley becomes too hot, you simply apply some collective, kick in some pedal, and cruise over the ridge into the next valley. With a few tons of rock between you and the enemy, you can resume your course.

Next month: Using your Longbow's muscle.

Unleashing Hellfire Upon Your Enemies

Fielded as a laser-guided weapon, the AGM-114 Hellfire actually accepts several guidance packages, including an Imaging Infrared (IIR) seeker, a Radio Frequency/IR seeker, and a millimeter-wave seeker. Capable of maneuvering at 13g's at supersonic speed, the missile has several launch modes which depend on the seeker type, the types of obstacles present, and the number of available designators.

When using Lock-On Before Launch (LOBL) to target weapons in an environment with multiple designators, the missile can be ripple-fired at multiple targets (each marked by a different laser designator) at one-second intervals. In a single-designator environment, the missile may be rapid-fired at different targets about every eight seconds.

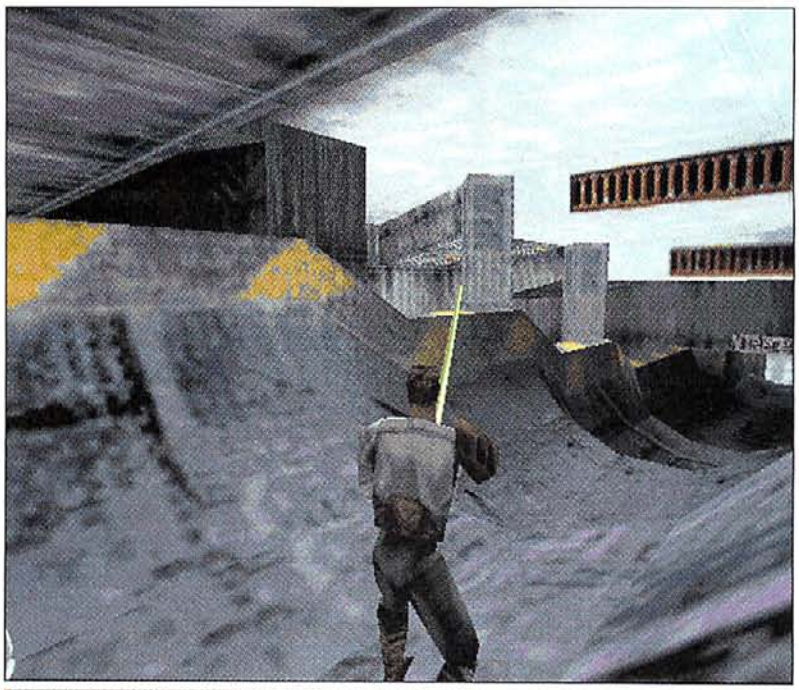
Using Lock-On After Launch (LOAL) mode, the missile will either clear high (LOAL-H) or low (LOAL-L) obstacles while seeking the coded laser designation. After locking on, the missile dives and strikes the target.



STRATEGY & TIPS

Jedi Knight

Uncover the Valley's Secrets in Part II of Our Tip Guide



DARK TIMES AHEAD When you're walking through this tunnel, use a light so you can see that small alcove up on your left.

by Thierry Nguyen

Last month, we took you through eight levels on the first disc of JEDI KNIGHT and showed you how to build up your reserve of Force Stars. This issue, we take you through all the secrets of the second disc, so that by the time you meet Jerec, you'll be a Jedi Lord with the full fury of the Force on your side.

9: Fuel Station Launch

Secret One: Near the beginning of this level, you'll have to get by a large pipe. Before you jump down from the pipe, walk along the edge to the right. There, you'll find the level's first secret.

Secret Two: After getting the yellow key, you'll start the fuel-tank puzzle. Use the key to open the door, walk down to the left side, and Force Jump to the top of the bunker at the end of the ledge.

Secret Three: In the bunker, there is a

12: Escape with the Map

Secret One: Take the elevator down to the conveyer belt area. As you get off the elevator, there should be a couple of large crates. Behind these crates is a secret room.

Secret Two: Take the conveyer belt to its destination: the room filled with large boxes. Make your way to the upper level, take out the sentry gun in the ceiling, and look for an alcove across the way. Force Jump to it.

Secret Three: Near Secret Two is a cubbyhole set into a wall. A rusty grate covers it. Make your way to the grate and slice it open with your lightsaber.

Secret Four: Near the elevator, you can see a large crate near a wall. Squeeze into the area between the crate and the wall and look for a breakable section of the crate. Cut it open with your lightsaber and go in.





BUNKER HOPPING Just before you enter this bunker in Level 9, be sure to use Force Jump to get to the top and grab some items.

turbolift that drops down. Take the lift, and when you exit, look up and to the left. You should see a small cubbyhole; jumping into this hole leads to a secret.

Secret Four: As you solve the fuel-tank puzzle, you'll enter a crawl space (just before the wrench) filled with ugnaughts. Find the door in the middle level of this area, turn on your light, and look toward the upper left for another cubbyhole.

Secret Five: Once you solve the fuel-tank puzzle, you'll take an elevator down. Stay on it for the return trip back up. After it reaches the floor you came from, it will move up another level to a secret area.

Secret Six: Near Secret Five is a room with a few barrels in the corner. Jump on top of them and make your way to the cubbyhole near the top of the wall.

Secret Seven: After nabbing Secret Six, go back down and destroy those barrels to uncover another cubbyhole.

Secret Eight: Destroy all six defense cannons and then blow up the wall that's opposite the door.

Secret Nine: Move to the right from Secret Eight and jump over the large pipe on your right. After walking along the wall, you should find yourself in a little hole.

Secret Ten: When you reach the end of the tunnels, turn on your light. Go under the overhang. Look up and to the left to find a small alcove tucked away.

10: 8t88's Reward

Secret One: When you enter the ship near the beginning of the level, you'll ascend some stairs. Behind these stairs is this level's first secret area.

Secret Two: You'll reach a room with a couple of elevators. Take the one down to the cargo room full of crates. Jump on top of the crates. You'll see that one is under a hole in the ceiling.

Secret Three: After breaking into the fan, follow the ledge around it before going in. Tucked away on the other side is a secret room.

Secret Four: When you're in the fan trying

17: The Valley Tower Ascent

Secret One: After entering the main building and going up the elevator, you'll be in a room that has two large fuel tanks in a corner. Destroy the fuel tanks to uncover the hallway hidden behind them.

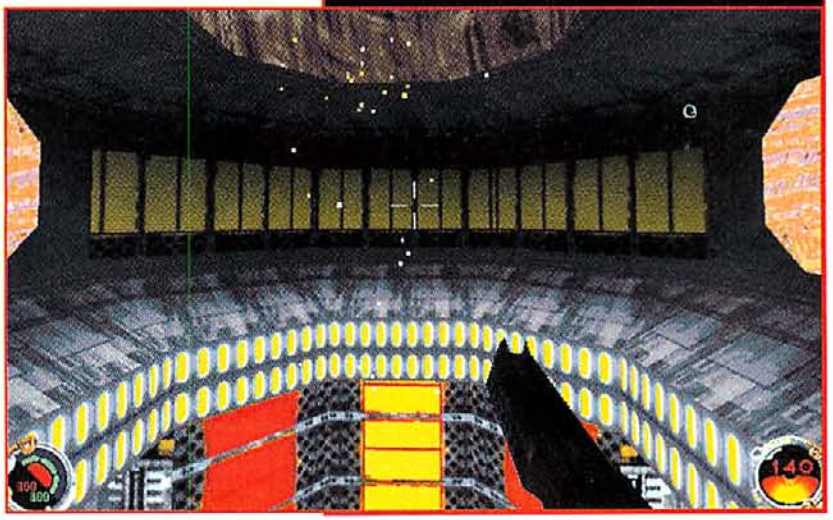
Secret Two: The next secret is in the gravity-lift area with the green light. If you turn on the lift, you can ride the crates up to the top ledge, where the secret lies. If you didn't turn it on, you'll need to hop across some ledges in order to make your way to the top.

Secret Three: You'll reach a wind tunnel that normally pushes you off the catwalk and into a canyonlike area. With proper timing and use of Force Speed, you can make your way to the base of the tunnel and into Secret Three.

Secret Four: After moving from the large wind tunnel into the canyon, you should enter a room filled with fuel tanks. Destroy these fuel tanks to uncover the hole hidden in the floor.

Secret Five: There is one last wind tunnel that shoots you upward to your final objective. As you rise through the wind tunnel, try to move forward so that you stop in the midsection of the tunnel. You can then climb up the wall and into a small cave by the side.

Secret Six: Right across from Secret Five is another cave. Just go around the wind tunnel, discover the secret, and hop back in to complete the level.





FAN OUT Go around this fan on Level 10 for one of the secret areas.

to get into the reactor core, you'll see a variety of dead-end ducts. One duct just beyond the door of the reactor core is the secret.

Secret Five: The secret here is another duct off to one side (Secrets Four and Five are actually next to each other).

Secret Six: When you reach the bottom of the reactor core, open the grate with your lightsaber. As you make your way down the tunnel, turn the light on and move to the left. The path leads to an offshoot tunnel and the last secret in this level.

18: Descent Into the Valley

Secret One: Go down the first elevator and drop onto the floor with the cargo box. There is a small turbolift in that area. Take it up and you should see a small hole across the way.

Secret Two: From Secret One, you can go into a tunnel leading to a

13: The Lost Planet of the Jedi

Secret One: Jump into the river and start swimming around. Soon you'll pass under a rock bridge. Just beyond the bridge is a hole into which you can jump. Inside is a small ledge and the first secret area.

Secret Two: At one point you'll be crossing a bridge flanked by two sentry guns. Destroy them both, then walk up to the spot where the left gun was. Behind the gun is a secret alcove.

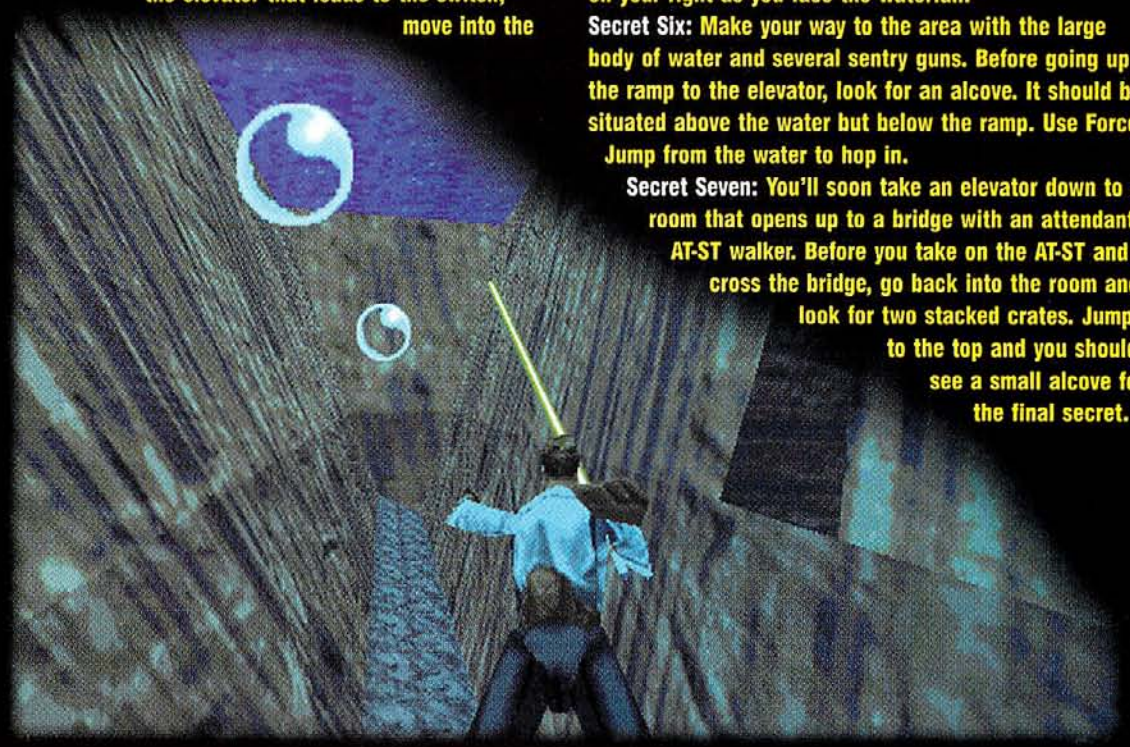
Secret Three: You'll be going into a bunker to flip the last switch that shuts off the force field. Before taking the elevator that leads to the switch, move into the small room on the right. Destroy the two fuel containers to open the grate below them.

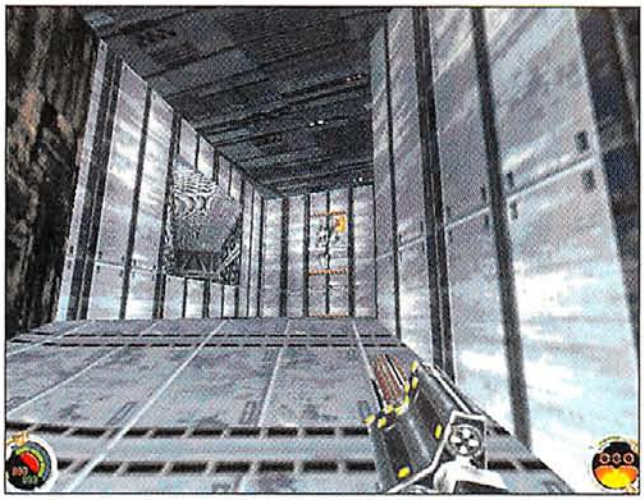
Secret Four: Get past the first force field, then take a dive into the pool. Take the first tunnel on the right and follow it to a slanted ramp against the wall. You can spot the alcove just above the ramp. Use either Force Speed or Force Jump to make your way to it.

Secret Five: Continue swimming downriver until you're taken over a waterfall. Turn yourself against the current and keep an eye out for the alcove within the wall. It's on your right as you face the waterfall.

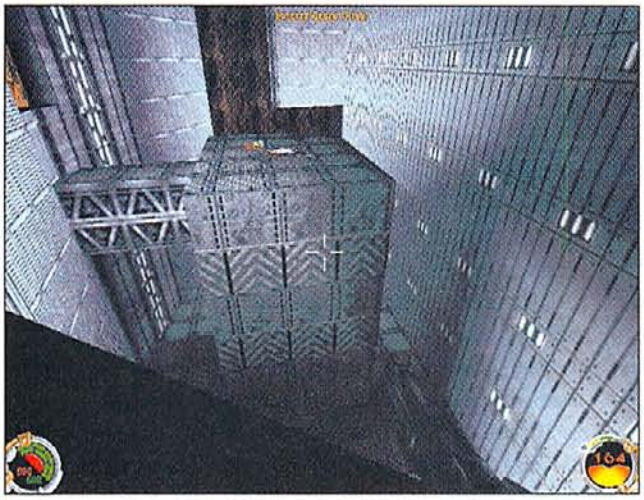
Secret Six: Make your way to the area with the large body of water and several sentry guns. Before going up the ramp to the elevator, look for an alcove. It should be situated above the water but below the ramp. Use Force Jump from the water to hop in.

Secret Seven: You'll soon take an elevator down to a room that opens up to a bridge with an attendant AT-ST walker. Before you take on the AT-ST and cross the bridge, go back into the room and look for two stacked crates. Jump to the top and you should see a small alcove for the final secret.

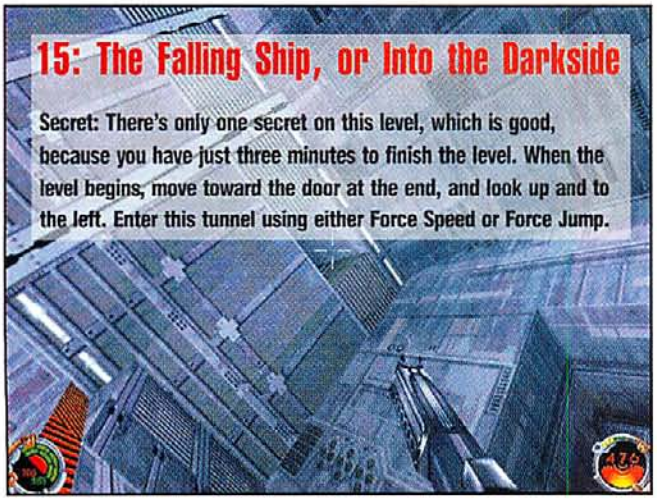




BRING DOWN THE WALLS After the three green switches, destroy this wall in the rocky hallway of Level 18.



LEAP OF FAITH Make your way up to this area in Level 19, and you're near three secrets already.



15: The Falling Ship, or Into the Darkside

Secret: There's only one secret on this level, which is good, because you have just three minutes to finish the level. When the level begins, move toward the door at the end, and look up and to the left. Enter this tunnel using either Force Speed or Force Jump.

room with a door on one side and a ramp on the other. Look up to the ledge above you and use Force Jump to get there.

Secret Three: You'll soon come across a room with a ramp and a large hole decorated with a black-and-yellow hazard border. Go to the base of the ramp, turn so that you face the entrance you came in, and look up. Use Force Jump to reach that secret alcove.

Secret Four: After discovering Secret Three, return to the first ramp. Before going up, go around and under the ramp to find a broken panel. Destroy the panel, but keep a safe distance; it will explode.

Secret Five: At one point in the level, you'll walk past three green switches. After going down the nearby elevator, you'll end up in a rocky area. As you move down this rocky area, keep an eye on the left side. Some cracks on the wall should give away yet another secret.

Secret Six: Walk down the hallway and make your way to a room filled with crates. Look around and you'll see another cracked wall. Blow it up to get at the secret area.

Secret Seven: Later on, you'll reach a very narrow ledge marked with hazard colors. Follow this ledge all the way to the end for the final secret.

19: The Valley of the Jedi

Secret One: Take the first elevator to the floor with the two Stormtroopers. Hop behind the crates in the back to discover the first secret.

Secret Two: When you reach the bottom floor, walk outside and circle around until you reach the lower of the two jutting ledges. Jump from the lower ledge to the higher ledge for the second secret.

Secret Three: From that same ledge, look up and you should see a small alcove tucked away in the rocks.

Secret Four: In this same area, there's a window with a shield power-up on it. Get off the ledge, stand outside the window, and Force Jump to it.

Secret Five: Take the large turbolift down, get off, and send it back up. Collect the goodies underneath.

Secret Six: After passing by the drill, you'll go down a circular hallway leading to the right. At the point where you must go left, turn right to see the cracked dead-end wall. Destroy it.

Secret Seven: When you get to the room with the gray ramp, look for the cracked wall nearby and destroy it.

Secret Eight: When you enter the area with the ropes and weights, don't cut the first rope. Make your way to the second counterweight and look along the wall. Here is another breakable section. Then solve the puzzle at your leisure.

With all these secrets revealed to you, you should have the necessary complement of Force Stars to realize the full powers of the Force. Defeat Jerec for Light or Dark, and keep your lightsaber skills sharp until LucasArt's upcoming expansion disc, MYSTERIES OF THE SITH.

STRATEGY & TIPS

Age of Empires

This Means War!

by Elliott Chin



SO WHAT IF IT'S UNFAIR Beat on enemy villagers and houses first to destroy your opponent's capacity for waging war.

Last month, I walked you through the most efficient manner of building a robust empire and sound infrastructure. Unfortunately, conquest of the world isn't often achieved without military conflict. This month's strategies focus on the nitty-gritty of combat—preparation and engagement—because we all know that it's always more satisfying to utterly destroy a foe than to beat him with a peaceful Wonder.

The Basics

Before engaging in combat, it's a good idea to move your troops to one central location and then divide them by type, such as cavalry, infantry, archers, and catapults. Then, using the Ctrl and number keys, assign a number to each group. When you need to issue commands to a group of units, you simply hit the appropriate number key, which automatically selects that group's units. This tactic is especially useful if enemy units swarm your attack force. If you band box your whole force and try to issue commands that way, you might select and send both archers and infantry to attack, say, the enemy's elephants. You should send the infantry to take on the pachyderms and draw the archers back to deliver ranged fire. To do that, all you need to do is hit the number key for the infantry, target the elephants, and then quickly hit the number key corresponding to the archers. You could then pull them a safe distance away and attack the elephants.

Grouping units prior to an offensive also allows you to better coordinate a combined-arms attack. You can group a small diversionary force to assail an enemy's walls, and then hit the number key to bring in the archers and, later, the catapults, all without having to move the screen from the targeted wall. Combined with the use of waypoints, groupings can make your military campaigns much more efficient.

Remember to scout the map early. It's imperative that you find out where your enemies' empires are and where excess resources are located. It's also important to find potential bottlenecks where you can erect defenses as well as vulnerable points that you can use for ambushes. It's a good idea to create and send out two clubmen early in the game. They'll derive the ordinary benefits of early scouting, but if they find an enemy camp, they can also do some crucial damage to the other player at this early juncture of the game.



HOLY CONVERSIONS, BATMAN! Research all the priest upgrades: They can become your most powerful units.

The Power of Religion

Priests are wildcard units that can turn the tide of battle. The first rule in using priests is to use them en masse. Build multiple temples and crank out several priests. Create groups of three so that they can concentrate their conversion efforts to increase their success rate. Don't create huge groups, though, because all the priests will waste their faith levels.

Skirmishers and Upgrading

Once you've found the other players, start harassing them with skirmishers. In the Stone Age, your clubmen scouts can pick off a few enemy villagers. Once you move to the Tool Age, send two or three scouts to harass the enemy camps. Scouts will reach the enemy faster than axemen, and speed is of the essence, since you don't want to give the enemy time to upgrade his defenses before you attack him again. In the Bronze Age, you can send a small group of cavalry to harass the enemy.

If you stick to small parties of three to four, these efforts shouldn't impact your own growth too negatively. However, by targeting villagers, houses, and farms, your skirmishers can stunt your enemy's growth quite significantly. At the very least, you'll force him to divert serious resources to both rebuilding what you destroy and to building adequate defenses.

Another aspect of the game is just as important as scouting and early engagement: upgrading your units. This is especially important if you are going to harass the enemy early on. Decide on which unit types you want to use as skirmishers, and then research weapon- and armor-upgrades for each of those unit types.

For example, when using archers, it is vital to research ballistics once you have access to it. Woodworking also helps by giving you increased bow-range.

The Wonder of It All

If You Build It, You Will Win

On larger maps, especially with multiple players, it's hard to achieve a military victory. In these cases, a Wonder victory is your best bet for winning. Here are some tips for Wonder construction.

First, don't build a Wonder unless you can defend it. Make sure you have enough stone to support several towers and walls for guarding your Wonder once you finish building it.

Once you start the task, don't just leave the construction to one lone villager. Concentrate all of your villagers on the construction, because each one will quicken the Wonder's completion. This tactic is especially important if you are racing with another player to finish a Wonder. If you have enough workers on the project, you could beat your opponent even if he starts building first.

Once you've built the Wonder, close it off with a ring of walls and towers. Keep some villagers within the walls to repair the Wonder in the event that it comes under attack. Keep a few cavalry units handy on the outside of this wall to destroy any incoming catapults that might come to take out your Wonder. Also keep some catapults inside the wall as added muscle. Catapults will spot and attack units that are out of the towers' range. Keep archers around to shore up your defenses.

Sunder the Wonder

If you need to destroy your opponent's Wonder, then you need to proceed quickly, but cautiously. Once you get the message that someone has started constructing a Wonder, it's time to call a conference with the other players and cease hostilities. Nothing benefits the Wonder-holding player more than having his enemies divided against him.

Once you get the first message, start building a large force. Don't panic, because you have at least 15 minutes to prep your attack force and move in.

Assuming you are relatively free to build an invasion force, start concentrating on horse archers and catapults. It's not so essential that you have cavalry and infantry in your Wonder-smashing force. Make sure you group your units by type, and then move to the walls and towers guarding the enemy Wonder. Although catapults will be important, the horse archers are key to taking down whatever troops are waiting inside or outside the Wonder's protective wall.

Let's assume that the other player is smart enough to have a mix of catapults, archers, and cavalry—backed up by towers—guarding his Wonder. Your catapults and horse archers should target the enemy catapults first. Once they are destroyed, immediately target the enemy towers with your catapults. The archers should attack enemy archers and then cavalry or infantry. Only after you've cleared the area of enemy troops and towers should you destroy the enemy walls. Finally, move in with your entire invasion force and take out the Wonder. The key is to use the enemy's wall to your advantage. Don't break it down early because then you'll let loose his cavalry to pick apart your band of catapults and horse archers. Simply proceed methodically and ignore the compulsion to race through the enemy's defenses.

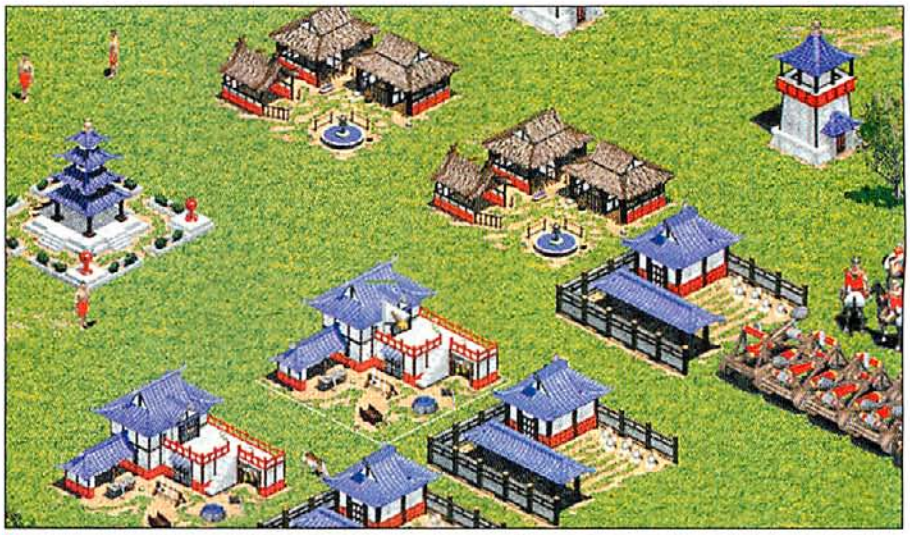
On the opposite end of this, the player protecting the Wonder might be better off deleting his own walls and massing his troops to destroy the enemy's relatively fragile catapults and horse archers.



THIS IS HOW IT'S DONE You can storm enemy fortifications by using a combined force of catapults and horse archers to wipe out the enemy's catapults and units.

How or What Do You Fight?

Once you've decided to bring your full military might to bear on your opponent, it's time to start thinking about your supply lines. It takes too much time to build an army in your town and then move it to your foe's town. Once you've committed to an assault, send a few villagers to your enemy's town periphery and build some military buildings. Go for two or three stables and archery ranges, as well as a few siege workshops and temples. You can then crank out troops and have them ready at the front lines immediately. You should also have the villagers build a few towers to guard this military camp.



WAR MACHINE When you decide that it's time for war, start building multiple military buildings near enemy borders.

Once you start attacking or harassing the enemy, there are certain targets that always take precedence. After clearing away the enemy's immediate defenders and towers, go for his villagers and houses. It's really not worth it to attack military buildings at this point. By destroying villagers and houses, you prevent your foe from gathering resources that he needs to rebuild his army, and you lower his unit limit, forcing him to build houses rather than new troops. You should also attack the low-hit–point farms, which makes your foe's rate of food production decline. Plus, he will need to devote 75 wood to rebuilding each farm.

After you've cleared away these targets, you can move on to military buildings. The military building that takes precedence over all others is the temple. This vile building spawns the annoying priest unit, which can turn your own troops against you. Destroy it before all other buildings. After you've destroyed the temple, move on to the siege workshops, academies, stables, barracks, and archery ranges.

On Offense and Defense

There are many advantages to going on the offensive. You can locate your opponents early on, stunt their growth, and alter their playing strategy. You can also stamp them out of the game early if you are really aggressive. If you embark on this strategy, the best units to use in your sweep are upgraded cavalry units and horse archers. Both are quick, and horse archers provide devastating fire support for the powerful cavalry units. (For dismantling enemy walls and protective towers, follow the guidelines for razing enemy Wonder defenses in the "Wonder of It All" sidebar.)

A defensive stance, though, isn't a bad strategy, particularly if you play civilizations with production bonuses, such as the Shang, Assyrian, and Yamato. In these cases, research walls and towers quickly, and build an archery range and a siege workshop to supplement your stationary defenses with mobile, ranged units. Academy units are also excellent for defense, due to their powerful attack and high hit-points.

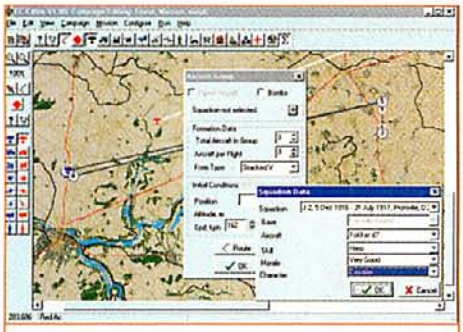
Do not erect protective walls right next to towers. Leave about five tiles of space between the towers and walls, and place archers immediately behind the wall to fire at incoming catapults and troops. Multiple levels of walls (stacking them two tiles thick), is also great for defense because it buys you more time to whittle away at the enemy with your archers and towers while he's trying to hack through your barracades.

If you follow these guidelines on the art of war in AGE OF EMPIRES, you should have no problem destroying any foe!

Elephants: The Great Debate

You might have noticed that I don't mention using elephants in this article. That's because I never use them. It's been written elsewhere that elephants and elephant archers are the ultimate units. They do have tremendous hit points and do a good deal of damage. However, on the flip side, they are incredibly expensive, they can't upgrade their attack strengths, and they're very slow. If I have to face elephants, I usually counter them with upgraded academy units. I'm not saying that elephants shouldn't be used; I just find horse-based units more economical and efficient.





MISSION POSSIBLE The mission editor in FLYING CORPS GOLD allows you to create single missions or entire campaigns.

▸▸▸Continued from pg 237

was still working on the program as this article went to press, so perhaps they'll get the TCP/IP support worked out. But for the time being, don't buy FLYING CORPS GOLD just for Internet play.

Both of these features, as well an improved view system, smarter AI, and support for the CH Force FX joystick, are available in the patch. Along with two new planes (a French Spad and the Fokker DVII), the biggest improvement in the GOLD version is a full-featured, easy-to-use editor that allows you to create not only new single missions, but also entire campaigns. You'll find nine new missions and a 12-mission campaign included as examples, and the editor will allow you to fly the user-created missions that are sure to pop up on the Internet soon.

FLYING CORPS GOLD retails for $44.95, but current FLYING CORPS owners can upgrade to FLYING CORPS GOLD by sending $15 to Empire Interactive, 580 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94104; by calling (415) 439-4854; or by emailing support@empire-us.com.

RAPTOR REBORN

Mission Studios has followed a similar model with its JETFIGHTER III F-22 Raptor simulation—a free patch that adds 3D support and other features, along with a commercial add-on with new missions and a mission editor.

JETFIGHTER III is an MS-DOS program, so Direct3D support isn't an option. Instead, the patch adds support for 3Dfx Voodoo-based (but not yet Voodoo Rush) graphics cards. A while back, Mission also announced that support was planned for Rendition Vérité-based cards. That hasn't happened yet, though Mission says it's still in the works.

As you'd expect, 3Dfx card users are treated to much more attractive graphics. Cloud and haze effects are nothing short of spectacular, and aircraft and terrain look much better. The biggest improvement, though, is in the sense of speed. With the original version of the sim, you had to run the game at a fairly low resolution to get a smooth frame rate. Now, graphics smoothly flow by on 3Dfx-equipped systems—flying low near mountains is breathtakingly real. There's also a frame-rate boost on MMX systems, but it's not as dramatic.

The flight models, while still simpler than those in F-22 RAPTOR and F-22 AIR DOMINANCE FIGHTER, are somewhat improved. High-altitude performance is more authentic, and rudders are now realistically ineffective at high speeds. Targeting has been improved with the ability to designate ground targets and a warning X that lets you know when a missile is out of its firing envelope.

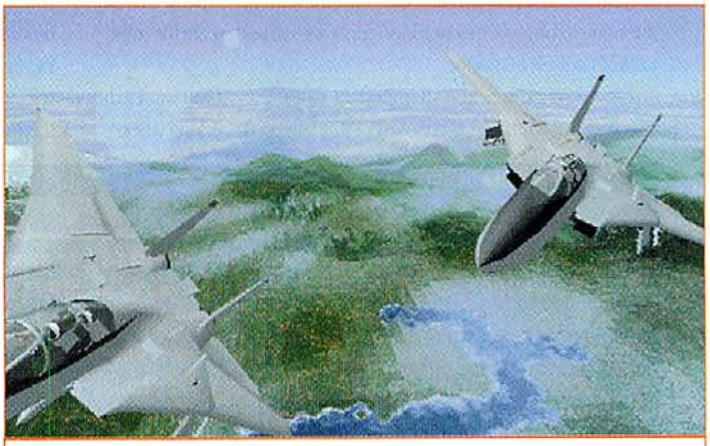
The most noticeable change to the sim engine is the addition of the F-14 Tomcat to the stable of aircraft you can fly. Equipped with the long-range Phoenix missile, Tomcats are great for knocking out bombers before they can become a threat to your carrier group.

All of these features are available in the free patch. If you purchase the PLATINUM EDITION, you also get new campaigns (over 200 missions) and scenery areas (20 million square miles, including Alaska, China, Korea, Japan, and Turkey). The PLATINUM EDITION includes every mission from the JETFIGHTER III campaign disc, as well.

There's also an in-depth, fairly easy-to-use editor that lets you create very elaborate missions. With all of the mission conditions (which you can set up) and the wide range of scenery areas available, I expect to see some very interesting missions popping up on the Net soon.

There's still room for improvement, though. The action-oriented JETFIGHTER series cries out for multiplayer support; and, of course, a Windows 95-native executable would be welcome as well. There's still no way to get an external view of other planes in the sim. And the sim still pauses when it loads scenery unless you manually copy CD files to the hard disk—Mission Studios needs to include an option to automatically preload the appropriate scenery area before a mission if you have the hard-drive space, à la LONGBOW 2.

JETFIGHTER III PLATINUM EDITION sells for $35. Various upgrades for owners of JETFIGHTER III and the JFIII ENHANCED CAMPAIGN CD are available and range from $10 to $20. For upgrade details, check out Mission's Web site at **www.missionstudios.com**.



TOP GUN The free JETFIGHTER III patch adds the F-14 Tomcat to the stable of planes available for you to fly.

STRATEGY & TIPS

Myth

How to Win at the Most Difficult Strat Game of the Year

by Greg Fortune

"The skillful commander takes up a position in which he cannot be defeated and misses no opportunity to overcome his enemy. Thus, a victorious army always seeks battle after his plans indicate that victory is possible under them, whereas an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning but without any planning." —*Sun Tzu,* The Art of War

If you want to be successful while playing MYTH, memorize this quote. Simply to survive in MYTH requires a level of strategy unprecedented in real-time games. We'll use these pages to help beginning MYTH players who are having trouble making it through the levels and keeping more than one or two units alive. We'll cover controls, tactics, and formations, and we'll walk you through the *Crow's Bridge* mission in order to demonstrate these principles in action. This guide will *not* give you the solutions to all the scenarios in MYTH, but it will provide you with the foundation to win them on your own.



CATCH ME IF YOU CAN You will lose a lot fewer men if you master the tactic of luring the enemy into your traps with decoys.

In Control

If you have to look away from the screen to find the button you need, you need to adjust your control setup. Some commands, like assigning and recalling custom groupings, cannot be reconfigured, so you'll need to get used to the defaults. For the most part, however, you can customize the controls. In particular, pay attention to how your view adjustments are set, as they are the most critical controls to master.

Gesture clicking is also an important skill to learn if you want to be successful at MYTH. It's composed of three steps: (1) clicking where you want the selected units to move, (2) holding the mouse button down while moving the mouse in the direction you want the units to face, and (3) moving the mouse and letting go of the button. The selected units will move to the spot that you've indicated, arrange themselves in the requested formation (if any), and face in the predetermined direction.

Lay of the Land

MYTH handles terrain better than any other game I've seen. Not only does the type and elevation of ground you're on affect movement rates, but it also modifies your "to-hit" chances, range (for projectile and thrown weapons), and defense values. Almost without exception, you should seek out the high ground. In particular, look for areas where the enemy's movement toward you is hampered or obstructed and you have a clear line of fire at them. These are great places for ambushes and traps, and they are key to keeping veterans in your army.

Eye in the Sky

You must master view control. Since your point of view is not directly overhead and the environment usually prevents you from having an uninhibited, static view of your troops, you will need to master perspective-rotation. If you are just panning left and right, forward and backward, you are missing the boat. These methods will get you to where the battle is, but they won't automatically give you the best

perspective on the action. If you find these view controls awkward, try remapping them to different keys. Whatever you do, make sure you can move and twist the view at will.

Birds of a Feather Die Together

There's one last thing I want to cover before we look at our *Crow's Bridge* example: grouping units. The best thing you can do with any of your units is to group it with another unit that complements its strengths and weaknesses. Archers should never be left alone without some sort of escort, preferably warriors or berserks. Melee units benefit greatly by having archers around to weaken the enemy before they can close to fighting range.

There is one unit that gets the ugly stepchild award, and that's the dwarf. Dwarves are surly, loudmouthed, and very careless about where they throw their bombs. If you are going to group dwarves with other unit types, particularly those that like to suddenly run out into battle, you'd better keep the little buggers on a short leash.

How do you keep all of these units under control in the middle of a battle? The answer lies in custom formations. The name is misleading, because these formations have nothing to do with how units are arranged on the battlefield. Custom formations, which I call groupings, have to do with assigning hotkeys to a group of units. Let's say that I want to divide my units into two groups, each composed of warriors, archers, and dwarves. I'll assign one hotkey to each tactical group and another to each type of unit in that group. Now I can select an entire group, tell it to move to a spot on the map, and quickly organize the units in that group by using the hotkeys and custom formations. If the enemy is closing in and I don't want the dwarves to bomb my own units, I can hit the hotkey for the dwarves and then hit the spacebar to tell them to stop. This is a lot more efficient than trying to click on the dwarves in the middle of a fight.

Look, We Found the Bodies!

Let's use the first mission, *Crow's Bridge*, as an example of how to put all



NO SOCCER PRACTICE FOR YOU This trow has seen better days. With my units safely out of the way and the bait doing the trick, big ugly is done for.

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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World

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Standing Around the Campfire

If you don't use the formations in MYTH, I've got two words for you: *You're dead!* Formations that work are perhaps the greatest innovation in MYTH. Some people will tell you that the line formations are the only ones you need. Don't listen to these people. Each formation has a use, and the better you get, the more uses you'll find for them. For example, assume you have a long line of warriors and are about to engage a mass of thrall. Just before the thrall reach your line, change the warriors' formation to a deep encirclement. The flanks of your line will wrap around the thrall, bringing every warrior to bear on the enemy. Try it a couple of times and you'll get an idea of just how powerful formations can be.

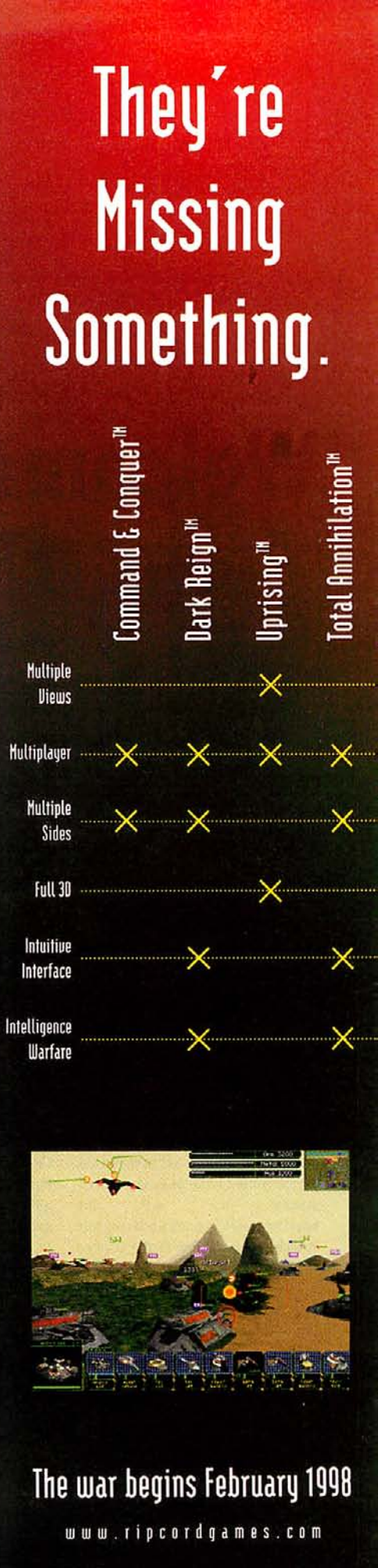
these control tips to use. You start the level with two warriors running away from the bridge; four warriors guarding the road; and four warriors, four archers, and a dwarf waiting in the town square. Why are the two soldiers at the bridge running away? Ten thrall just walked out of the river and have taken up positions by the bridge.

First, let's look at the map. The area is mostly flat, with some rolling hills to either side of the road. The hills to the left of the road are spotted with trees, which obstruct archers, so take up a position on the big hill to the right of the road. Have the two warriors from the bridge join up with the four guarding the road, and make a long line at the bottom of the hill facing the thrall. Put these units in guard mode with the G key. Now tell all the units from town to head for the hill. Assign a group hotkey for the archers and give the dwarf his own hotkey.

Once the reinforcements from town arrive at the hill, have the archers form a

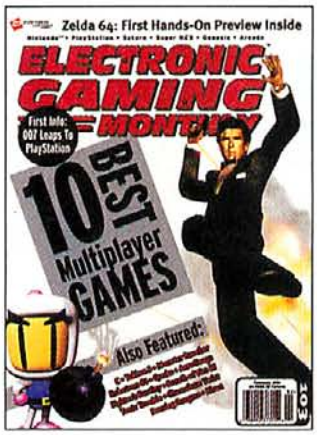


DIE FOOLS There is nothing dwarves like better than blowing things up. This fetch is about to find that out the hard way.





Welcome to the Other Side



Electronic Gaming Monthly

Over 100 issues strong, *EGM* has proven time and time again that it's the leader in providing the console gaming market with the most accurate and respected news, reviews and previews around. That, along with a recent redesign featuring a cleaner, more refined look, makes *EGM* one of the few gaming magazines that not only presents information with an edge, but also maintains a kick-ass design. Look for the current issue of *EGM* on newsstands now with the latest info on Nintendo's upcoming title Yoshi's Story, along with the coveted 1997 Readers' Choice Awards.



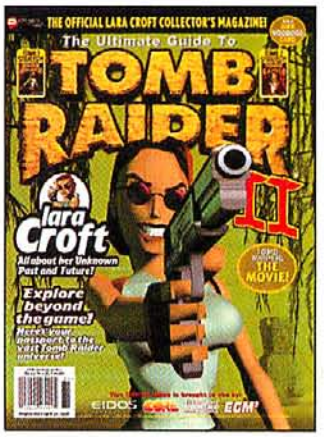
EGM²

Want to take your console gaming to the next level? Then rely on *EGM²* to get you there with ease. *EGM²* is your source for the most in-depth strategies and coolest tips and tricks for all of the latest titles. Hardcore gamers will enjoy the Gamers' Forum, in addition to the variety of genres covered in the magazine. Look for the most recent issue of *EGM²*, featuring a walkthrough for Capcom's newest PlayStation gem, Resident Evil 2, along with strategy for a slew of games for the PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Saturn. *EGM²* brings you the games by any means necessary.



Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

Do you consider yourself a die-hard fan of the PlayStation? Then why not read the sole U.S. magazine that brandishes the Sony PlayStation license? The *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* (*OPM* for short) not only gives you a demo disc with playable previews of upcoming PlayStation titles, it also tells you everything you need to know about what's going on in the world of PlayStation. Check out the latest issue for a look at Tecmo's eye-popping new fighter, Dead or Alive, and to find out what game is *OPM*'s choice for the Best PlayStation Game of 1997. *OPM* is all a PlayStation gamer needs.



The Ultimate Guide to Tomb Raider II

Can't get enough of the hottest polygonal babe to ever grace us with her presence? Then *The Ultimate Guide to Tomb Raider II* is the book for you. This one is far from being your run-of-the-mill strategy guide, in fact it covers the entire Tomb Raider universe. It has everything from interviews with the development team to a look at what upcoming technology will do for games like Tomb Raider. This is in addition to the easy-to-use and in-depth Tomb Raider and Tomb Raider II strategy guides. Of course, this guide wouldn't be complete without an in-depth look at Lara Croft herself. Come take a look at the future of strategy guides.

Console gaming is where it's at. Since this is the case, why not keep up to speed by reading the most reliable information in the galaxy? With the plethora of different magazines we have to offer, let us guide you to the other side.

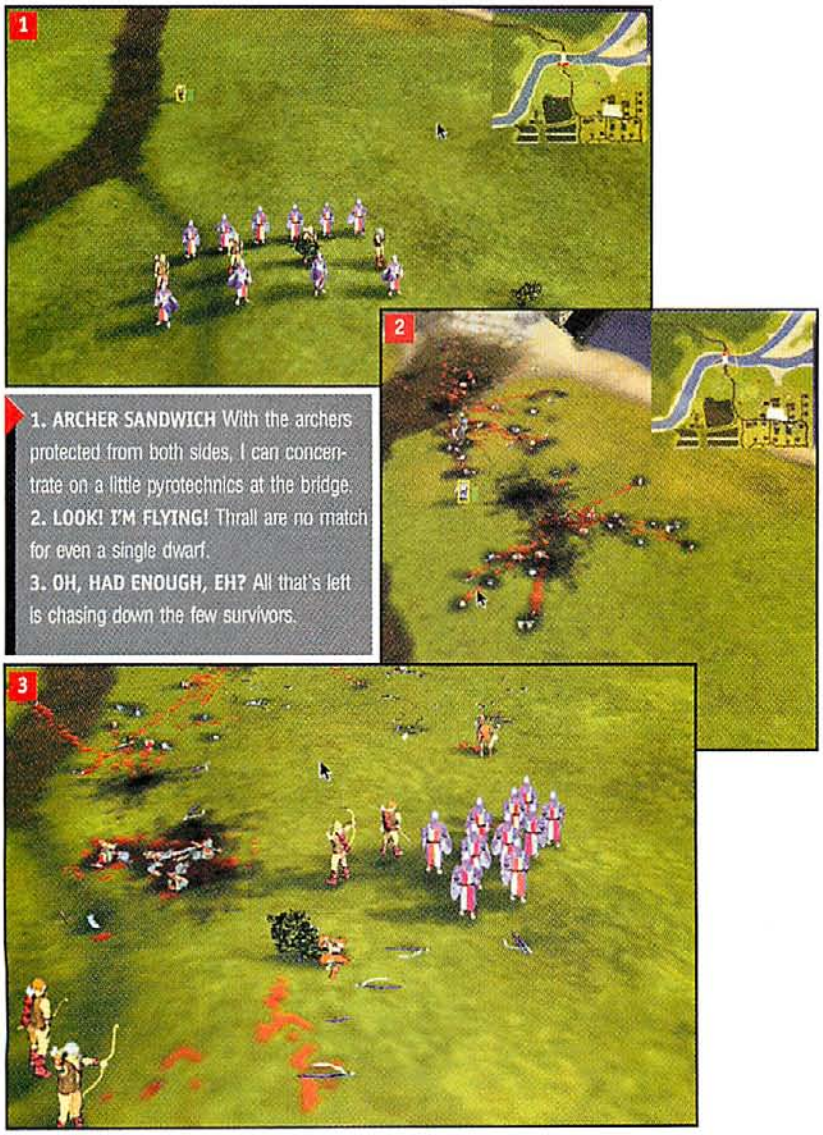
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short line at the top, facing the bridge. By this time, four ghôls should have come over the bridge to take up positions behind you. To defend against a flanking attack, have the four warriors from town form a long line behind the archers, protecting the archers' rear flank.

Now comes the fun part. The thrall are slower than any other unit in the game, so send your dwarf down to the bridge and use him to attack the thrall standing there. When he's almost finished with them, evil reinforcements should arrive from the other side of the bridge. Draw the dwarf back to the main group, just in front and at one end of the main line of warriors. As the new enemies arrive, have your archers concentrate on the soulless, and let your dwarf eat into the thrall as they advance. Any thrall that does manage to make it to the warriors will be wounded and defenseless against your fresh troops. Before you know it, you'll be chasing after the tattered remains of your attackers.

That's all we have room for this month. If you're wondering where the multiplayer tips are, I've left them out for one reason: There's a lot of information online. Just go to **www.bungie.com**, and look for the links to related Web sites. You'll find a lot of great information there. Happy hunting, and may all your dwarves be veterans!



1. **ARCHER SANDWICH** With the archers protected from both sides, I can concentrate on a little pyrotechnics at the bridge.
2. **LOOK! I'M FLYING!** Thrall are no match for even a single dwarf.
3. **OH, HAD ENOUGH, EH?** All that's left is chasing down the few survivors.

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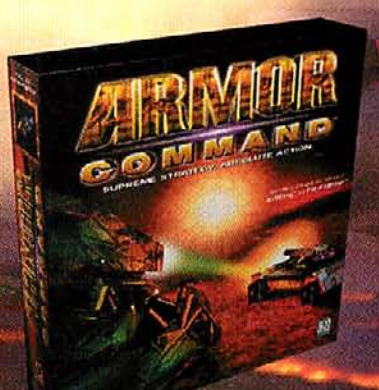
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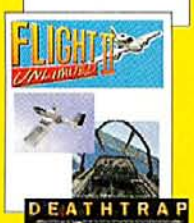
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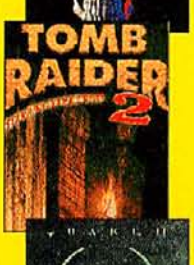
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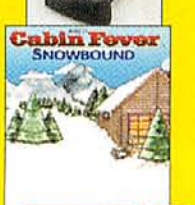
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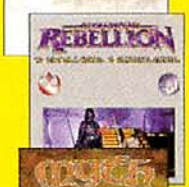
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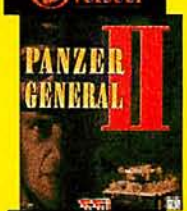


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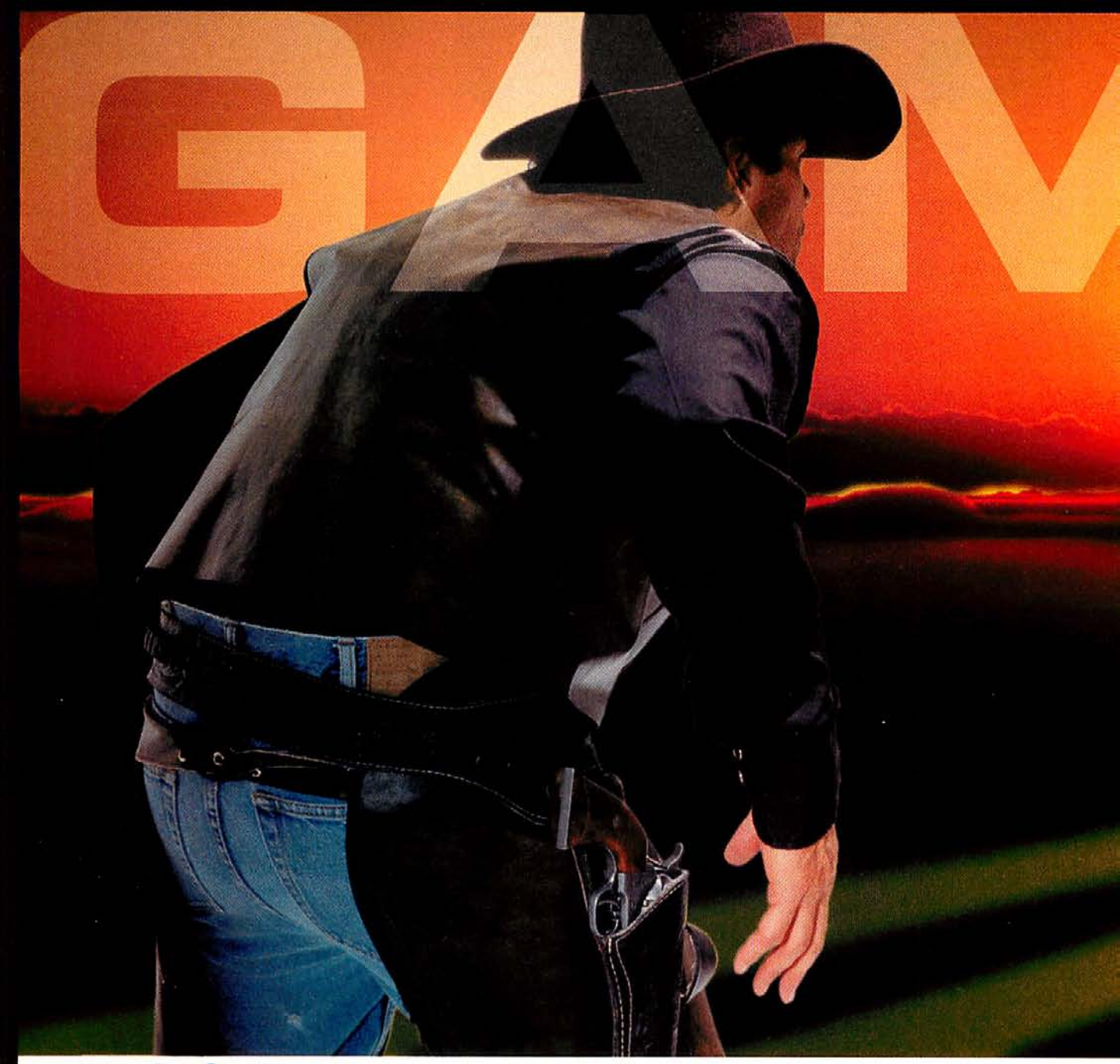
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Release Date: 4/98 PC CD $49



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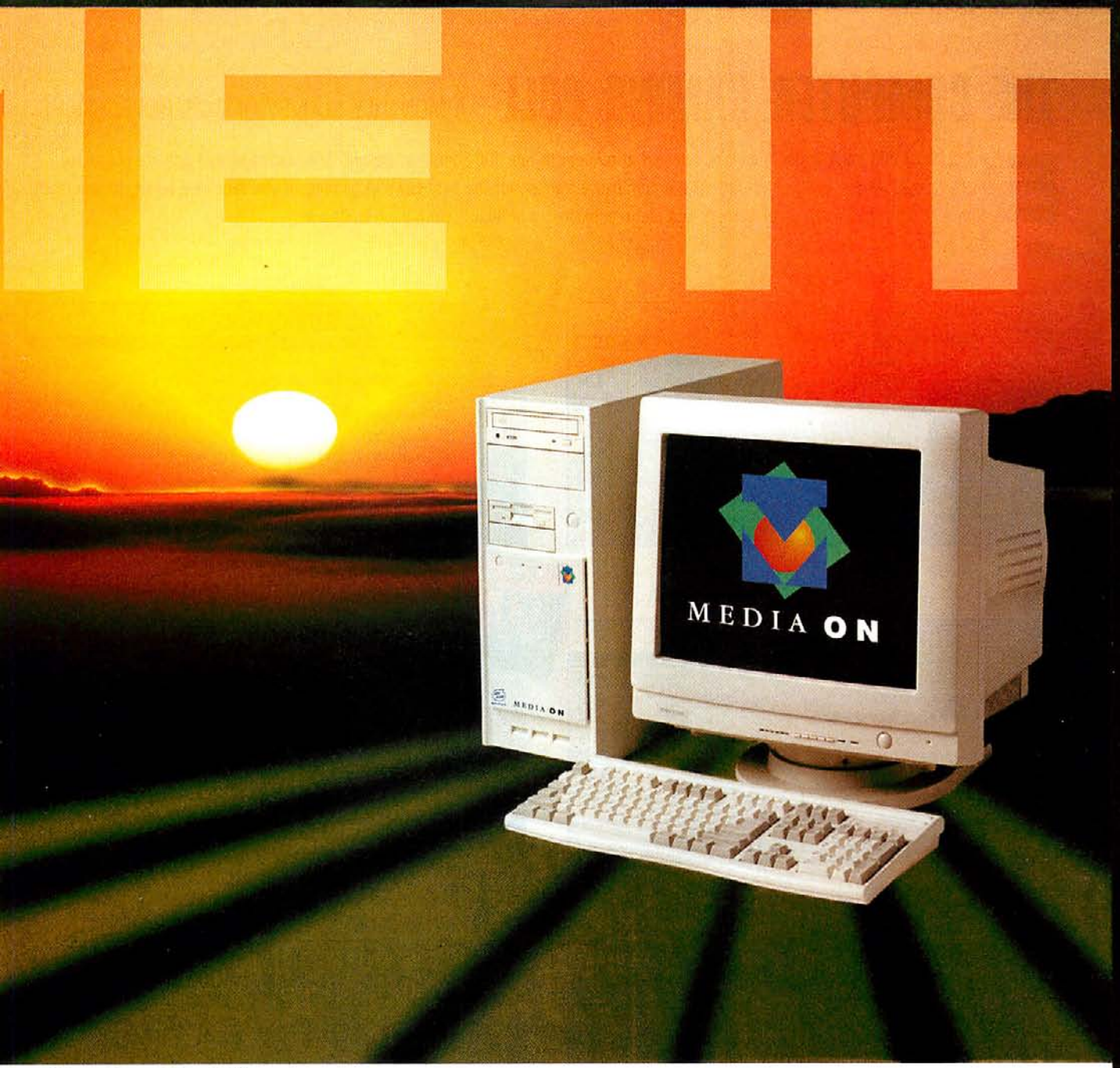
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TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution of Eternity	id Software/Rogue	8.95
2	Quake Pack 1: Scourge of Armagon	id Software/Ritual	8.90
3	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	8.58
4	Duke Nukem 3D	3D Realms	8.26
5	Tomb Raider	Eidos	8.23
6	Quake	id Software	8.02
7	The Need for Speed SE	EA	7.94
8	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	7.72
9	Moto Racer	EA	7.65
10	Hexen II	Activision	7.60



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	8.21
2	The Pandora Directive	Access	8.17
3	Rama	Sierra	7.78
4	Twinsen's Odyssey	Activision	7.77
5	The Neverhood	DreamWorks	7.70
6	Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	7.56
7	Circle of Blood	Virgin	7.50
8	Spycraft	Activision	7.43
9	The Last Express	Broderbund	7.32
10	Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	7.29



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	You Don't Know Jack II	Berkeley Systems	8.53
2	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	8.20
3	You Don't Know Jack Movies	Berkeley Systems	7.93
4	You Don't Know Jack Sports	Berkeley Systems	7.74
5	Power Chess	Sierra	7.37
6	Sierra Poker	Sierra	6.81
7	—		
8	—		
9	—		
10	—		



TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	8.29
2	AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	8.09
3	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	8.00
4	Flight Simulator 98	Microsoft	7.92
5	Silent Hunter	SSI	7.85
6	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	7.81
7	EF2000	Ocean	7.59
8	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	7.50
9	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	7.39
10	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	7.33



TOP SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links LS	Access	8.65
2	NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	8.24
3	NHL 97	EA Sports	8.08
4	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	7.97
5	NBA Live 97	EA Sports	7.96
6	Tripleplay 98	EA Sports	7.82
7	Jack Nicklaus 4	Accolade	7.78
8	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	7.48
9	PGA Tour Pro	EA Sports	7.41
10	NBA Live 96	EA Sports	7.37



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty	New World Computing	9.10
2	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	8.85
3	Total Annihilation	GT Interactive	8.80
4	WarCraft II	Blizzard	8.74
5	Heroes II	New World Computing	8.73
6	Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	8.72
7	Civilization II	MicroProse	8.71
8	Red Alert: Counterstrike	Virgin/Westwood	8.42
9	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	8.22
10	Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	8.19



TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Diablo	Blizzard	8.66
2	Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.36
3	Ultima Online	Origin	7.24
4	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	7.10
5	—		
6	—		
7	—		
8	—		
9	—		
10	—		



TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk	SSI	8.75
2	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	8.65
3	Steel Panthers II	SSI	8.36
4	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	8.09
5	Battleground: Bull Run	TalonSoft	8.02
6	Tigers on the Prowl II	HPS	7.98
7	Battleground: Antietam	TalonSoft	7.97
8	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia	TalonSoft	7.95
9	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	7.72
10	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	7.52

		GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★	1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty	New World Computing	ST	9.10
★	2	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution of Eternity	id Software/Rogue	AC	8.95
	3	Quake Pack 1: Scourge of Armagon	id Software/Ritual	AC	8.90
	4	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	ST	8.85
	5	Total Annihilation	GT Interactive	ST	8.80
★	6	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	8.75
	7	WarCraft II	Blizzard	ST	8.74
	8	Heroes II	New World Computing	ST	8.73
	9	Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.72
	10	Civilization II	MicroProse	ST	8.71
★	11	Diablo	Blizzard	RP	8.66
★	12	Links LS	Access	SP	8.65
		Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	8.65
	14	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	AC	8.58
★	15	You Don't Know Jack II	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.53
	16	Red Alert: Counterstrike	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.42
	17	Steel Panthers II	SSI	WG	8.36
★	18	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	SI	8.29
	19	Duke Nukem 3D	3D Realms	AC	8.26
	20	NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	SP	8.24
	21	Tomb Raider	Eidos	AC	8.23
	22	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.22
★	23	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD	8.21
	24	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.20
	25	Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	ST	8.19
	26	The Pandora Directive	Access	AD	8.17
	27	AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	SI	8.09
		Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	WG	8.09
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	48	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	WG	7.72
		Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	AC	7.72
		Dark Reign	Activision	ST	7.72

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
51	The Neverhood	DreamWorks	AD	7.70
52	Dungeon Keeper	EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.69
53	Moto Racer	EA	AC	7.65
54	Hexen II	Activision	AC	7.60
55	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	ST	7.59
	EF2000	Ocean	SI	7.59
57	Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	AD	7.56
58	X-COM: Apocalypse	MicroProse	ST	7.55
59	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	WG	7.52
60	Circle of Blood	Virgin	AD	7.50
	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	SI	7.50
62	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	SP	7.48
63	Interstate '76	Activision	AC	7.46
64	MDK	Playmates/Shiny	AC	7.44
65	Spycraft	Activision	AD	7.43
66	CivNet	MicroProse	ST	7.42
67	PGA Tour Pro	EA Sports	SP	7.41
68	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	SI	7.39
	Fantasy General	SSI	ST	7.39
	Imperialism	SSI	ST	7.39
71	Lords of the Realm II	Sierra	ST	7.38
72	NBA Live 98	EA Sports	SP	7.37
	Power Chess	Sierra	CP	7.37
74	Daggerfall	Bethesda	RP	7.36
	FPS Football Pro '96	Sierra	SP	7.36
76	Age of Rifles Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	7.33
	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	SI	7.33
78	Last Express	Broderbund	AD	7.32
79	Comanche 3	Novalogic	SI	7.31
	Shadows of the Empire	LucasArts	AC	7.31
81	FPS Football Pro '97	Sierra	SP	7.30
	Star Fleet Academy	Interplay	SI	7.30
83	Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	AD	7.29
84	FIFA 97	EA Sports	SP	7.27
	Robert E. Lee: Civil War General	Sierra	WG	7.27
86	688(I) Hunter/Killer	EA/Jane's	SI	7.25
87	Pacific General	SSI	WG	7.24
	Ultima Online	Origin	RP	7.24
89	Theme Hospital	EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.19
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91	Virtual Pool	VR Sports	SP	7.16
	Zork Nemesis	Activision	AD	7.16
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94	Descent II	Interplay	AC	7.14
	Magic the Gathering	MicroProse	ST	7.14
96	Wipeout XL	Psygnosis	AC	7.12
97	Flying Corps	Empire	SI	7.11
98	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	7.10
	The Need for Speed II	EA	AC	7.10
	Privateer: The Darkening	Origin	SI	7.10

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

WELCOME TO THE COOPERSTOWN OF COMPUTER GAMES. Here you'll find, raised upon pedestals, the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

ALONE IN THE DARK (I-Motion, 1992)
Lovecraftian horror goes 3D, with shifting camera angles adding to the creepy atmosphere.

BATTLE CHESS (Interplay,1988)
The Franklin Mint of computer chess games with violent and funny animation disguising a solid chess engine.

BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR (Dynamix,1993)
As rich and imaginative as Raymond Feist's world itself; its 3D perspective was fresh.

CHESSMASTER (Software Toolworks, 1986)
The Cadillac of castling, this chess masterpiece gets better with each version.

DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)
Trend-setting graphics, digitized stereo, and great hack-and-slash from a decade ago.



DAY OF THE TENTACLE (LucasArts, 1993)
Offbeat sequel to MANIAC MANSION; the interactive equivalent of a classic Chuck Jones cartoon.

DOOM (id Software, 1993) Revolutionized PC action games and network gaming; surpassed in technology but not gameplay.

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (EA,1986)
Revolutionary physics-based baseball game that pleased both action and statistics fans.

EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)
WWII in space, this mainframe transplant brought elegant mechanics, depth, and unending replayability to the PC.

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse,1988)
A "thinking man's" sim, with great missions, in which sneaking around is as fun as dogfighting.

FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
Tough, detailed jet sim with ambitious AI, graphics, and connectivity to match its realism.

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO (Dynamix, 1993)
Physics-based system, good AI, and unmatched career play make this the ultimate in pigskin play.

GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)
First variable order of battle changed the look of all American Civil War games on the PC.

GUNSHIP (MICROPROSE, 1989)
Great character continuity, R&R for fatigued pilots, and even sick leave; best chopper fare until Jane's LONGBOW.



HARPOON (360 Pacific, 1989)
In-depth modern naval battles in real-time, based on Cold War fears.

KAMPFGRUPPE (SSI, 1985)
Armored warfare on WWII's Eastern Front, offered engaging battles on multiple platforms.

KING'S QUEST V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
Redefined the graphic adventure with non-text-based parser and VGA graphics.

LEMMINGS (Psygnosis, 1991)
The lovable cartoon Lilliputians were real-time hits on every platform.

LINKS 386 PRO (Access Software, 1992)
Topped the leader board in graphics and realism for its era.

M-1 TANK PLATOON (MicroProse, 1989)
Realistic sim that properly focused on armored formations rather than single vehicles; good mission designs.

MASTER OF MAGIC (MICROPROSE, 1994)
The atmosphere and variety of MAGIC: THE GATHERING with the sophistication of CIVILIZATION.

MASTER OF ORION (MicroProse, 1993)
Remarkable diplomatic AI; deep and varied technology tree; aliens required radically different playing styles.

MECH BRIGADE (SSI, 1985)
Modern armored battles with improved KAMPFGRUPPE system and more realism.



MIGHT & MAGIC (New World Computing, 1986)
First-person, maze-based RPG with huge environment and tough tactical combat.

M.U.L.E. (EA, 1983)
A landmark multiplayer strategy game that had no weapons of destruction, just cutthroat competition that made economics fun.

PANZER GENERAL (SSI, 1994)
A truly fun wargame with an elegant interface, great campaigns, strong AI, good graphics, and impressive sound.

RED BARON (Dynamix, 1990)
WWI air combat with great graphics, incredible realism, and a versatile replay feature.

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION (MicroProse, 1991)
CGW's #1-rated game of all time; indescribably addictive world conquest/exploration game.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
Combines pirate adventure, action, RPG, and strategy to make the most successful hybrid of all time.

SID MEIER'S RAILROAD TYCOON (MicroProse, 1990)
SimCity meets 1830 with robber barons for emphasis.

SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
Urban planning with fascinating consequences and challenges; the first great software toy.

STARFLIGHT (EA, 1986)
Depth, great characters, and a good sci-fi storyline set early standards for RPGs.



THE BARD'S TALE (EA, 1985)
Pioneered three-point animation, 3D color mazes, and automapping.

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (LucasArts, 1990)
Comedy adventure that set new standards in writing quality and social sensitivity.

THEIR FINEST HOUR (LucasArts, 1989)
WWII sim with great campaigns and crew member options some current sims lack.

TIE FIGHTER (LucasArts, 1994)
Most satisfying *Star Wars* space-combat game to date lets you live on the dark side.

ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)
Coherency and surprising subtlety emphasized role-playing, and set the tone for later ULTIMAS.

ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
High-concept RPG explored meaning of virtue and put the ROLE in role-playing.

ULTIMA VI (Origin Systems, 1990)
This RPG as morality play paved way for ULTIMA ONLINE'S realistic environs and objects.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (Origin Systems, 1992)
The first truly 3D RPG, and still the most convincing; its dungeon walls were nicely "painted" with texture-mapped graphics.

WAR IN RUSSIA (SSI, 1984)
More realistic than EASTERN FRONT, it captured the essence of the largest land campaign in history.

WASTELAND (Interplay, 1986)
Derived from Mike Stackpole's *Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes*, this is the definitive postapocalyptic RPG.



WING COMMANDER I (Origin Systems, 1990)
A hot spaceflight engine, unfolding story path, and great characters.

WING COMMANDER II (Origin Systems, 1991)
Darker story, grittier feel, sound card advances, and tougher AI made this a sequel of sequels.

WING COMMANDER III (Origin Systems, 1994)
Surprisingly satisfying FMV space opera didn't lose the essence of the space-combat game.

WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Defined the computer RPG with maze-based viewpoint and atmospheric spell names.

WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id Software, 1992)
Smooth scrolling action blastfest cleverly updated the original, and put shareware back on the map.

X-COM (MicroProse, 1994)
Premier tactical squad-level engine combined with alien tech research and pop culture for a sci-fi game nearly as addictive as Civ.

ZORK (Infocom, 1981)
The progenitor of adventure games on the PC; its humor and challenging puzzles seem timeless.

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MARTIN CIRULIS

What's the Deal with...Netgaming Fantasies?



The dust is just beginning to settle on ULTIMA ONLINE, and regardless of what else can be said about Origin—a company that lived the good life off of two years of press releases and then handed an unfinished land over to the rabid Cyber-cast of *The Lord of the Flies* without even a "Beware, evildoers, the Avatar is watching"—I think some very important lessons can be learned from the experience, about the clash between the average consumer's expectations of Netgaming, and about the harsh realities of actually trying to play a game over the nutty hodgepodge of misanthropic technology known as the Net.

After watching the ULTIMA affair unfold while the rest of the Netgaming industry teeters on the brink of bankruptcy, I have come to realize that the problem lies in the nature of the beast, as well as in the greedy hearts and overly optimistic minds of game providers.

The whole thing is akin to Ford showing a concept "car of tomorrow" in the '50s and all of us expecting to fly to work the next year. It just ain't happening. We've all been sold such a bill of goods about how cool and capable the Internet is that we expect it to work as smoothly as it does on TV. The ugly truth is that for the most part, the Net as it is today is just not capable of supporting the kind of smooth gaming experience the average consumer is looking for, and expecting.

If you thought fooling around with your config files was tedious in the pre Win-95 days, just wait until you have to futz around for hours trying to figure out why your ultracool, new Net-capable game keeps crashing your system every time you enter the gamer's chat area. Now, part of this is, without a doubt, due to some really bad multiplayer code being put out by game companies, as "Net capability" is still a big, last-minute gimmick thrown into games by nervous execs. But the rest of the problem is just the simple fact that regardless of what Bill Gates says, the Internet is still a rough place for software, and most of us are asking our proctologist to help us find our ISP. Hell, it's only been a couple of years since modems have been able to speak the same protocol, the 56KB standard exists only on paper right now, and yet we're complaining that we can't play graphically intense games with our buddies from Tibet without a patch or two.

> **"Most of us are asking our proctologist to help us find our ISP."**

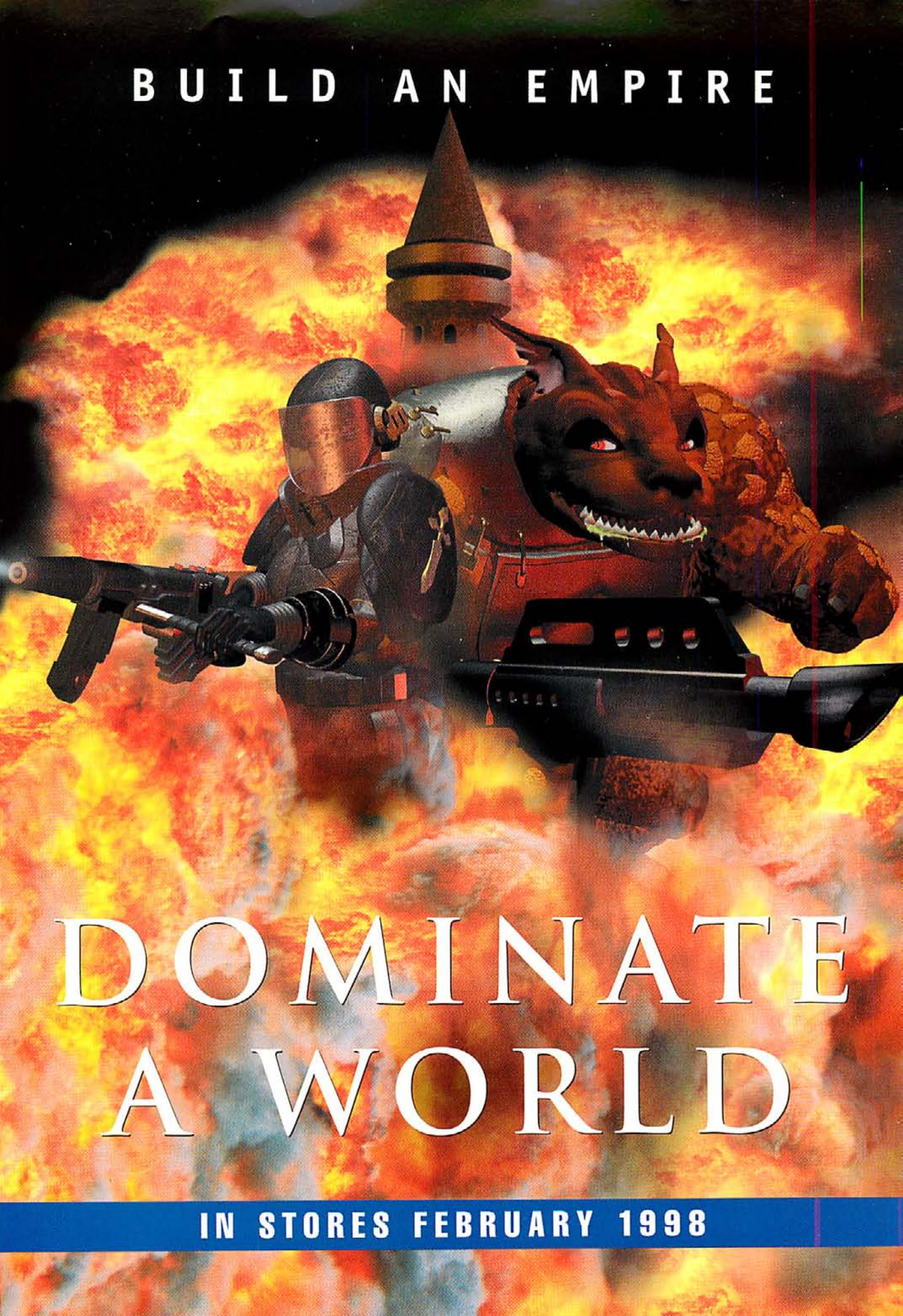
Anybody thinking seriously of spending server dollars on gaming should keep in mind two things: 1) That any Netgame (or Netgame service) more complex than *Battleship* should be considered, as should the Internet itself, a work in progress; and 2) You can't always get what you want, but sometimes you get what you need. In other words, be prepared to suffer through constant patches, and be open-minded enough to give a simpler game a chance, despite the fact you came for the glamour.

There are plenty of non-3D blastfest Netgames out there that are actually designed for the way the Net is now instead of how we would like it to be. Activision's NETSTORM may not offer the alternative lifestyle thrill of an Elf discussing the price of leather shoes with an Orc, but on the other hand, it works—and it brings out what the Net is good at—connectivity and continuity. It's a better use of your dollars to play a good game that works, than to sit around and gripe because your flight sim looks like a slide show.

The bottom line is that, despite what any PR guy or overenthusiastic designer might tell you, Netgames are not a Plug-and-Play item yet, nor will they be until the basic technology stabilizes and we are all connected to fast, flat-rate servers through our fiber-optic cable modems. You may have your 50-something modem and your free game server, but it's not doing you much good if your ISP is charging you by the minute to route your data through a 200-baud cheese grater in Pakistan. Sitting there screaming at your fellow strategy gamers to hurry up because your meter is running, or swearing at designers because you've discovered that "action game" translates to "lag fest" is just not going to do much good.

Do your reading, figure out what your Net connections are actually capable of, and then decide if you want to pay somebody to participate in what is still a grand experiment. Once you come at Netgames with your eyes wide open, then you can let the coolness that really exists overwhelm you, instead of moving from one disappointing experience to another, simply because all you've known is the hype.

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